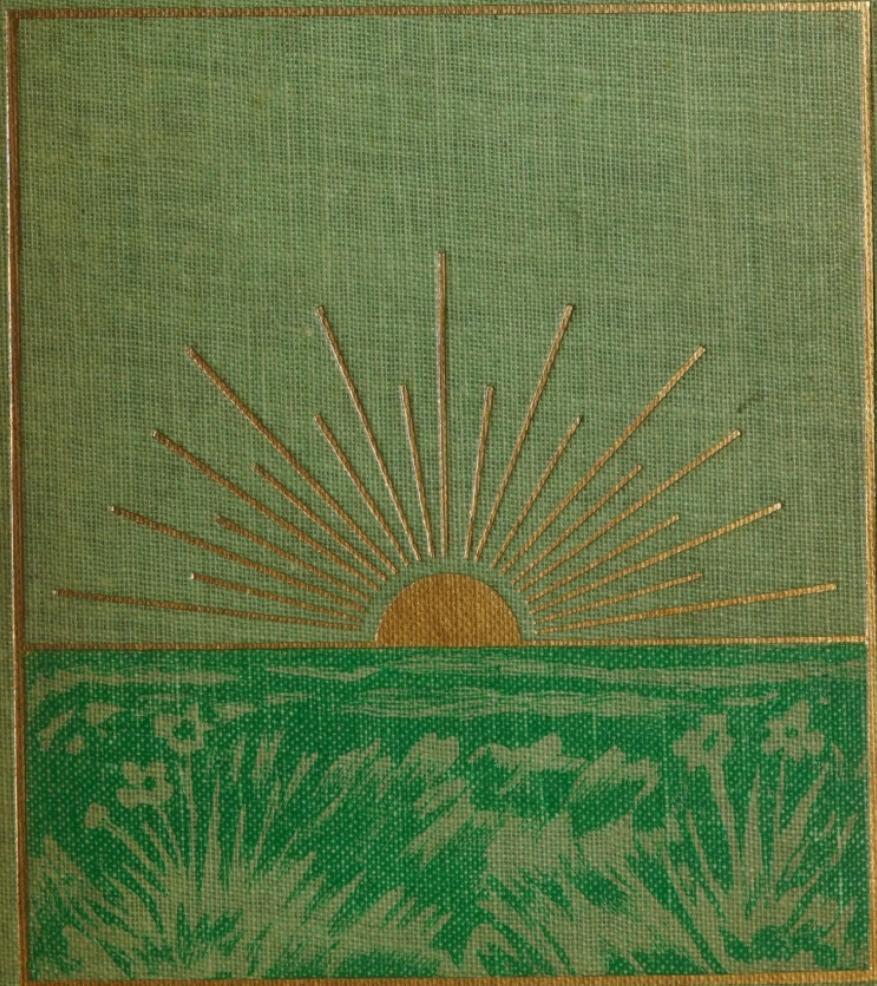


AROMANCE *of the Lost*



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A Romance of the Lost

BY TOM McINNES

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AN INKLING

THRO' my uncertain heart a moody tide
 Of mere emotion evermore doth steal,
 Fleckt with shining passions that appeal
For solace that is evermore denied.
But as the waters that elusive glide
 Thro' lonely forests doubtful yet reveal
 Some Ocean faith—so unafraid I feel
To test with Death this heart unsatisfied.

And from that tide thro' late haphazard years
 I've gather'd crystall'd words sometimes—like these:
 Things marvell'd out from many memories ;—
Uncanny songs, wherein withal one hears
 Some overtone of happier melodies,
Or rhythm falling from enchanted spheres.



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F E V

I.

UP from a sea that was Celtic,
On a midsummer night of old,
A fairy rose in the moonlight
Where the swooning waters roll'd
To a crag that was crown'd with a castle,
Irregular, round and high—
The castle bold, embattled,
Of days gone by.

II.

And a piper paced the ramparts
In his own clan-tartan clad,
With the ancient arms accoutred
That his father's father had ;
And the pipes that he play'd were chanting
Of valor and Highland pride—
To the tune of them kings had conquer'd,
And heroes died.

III.

Tho' only a lad come twenty,
He could hold with any man,
And well was he taught in the music,
And well could he lead his clan ;
And the gallant air he was playing
He play'd as never before—
Then he ceased and drew from its scabbard
His bright claymore.

IV.

And he waved it aloft, exulting
In the promise of coming years,
And feats of arms and glory
Got from the shock of spears ;
Ah ! the glint of that jewell'd claymore
That his father's father had—
'Twill be handled with honor surely
By that gay lad !

V.

But O, my Bonnie, my Bonnie !
What sound is this in thine ears,
That no man nor maid in the castle
Nor drousing warder hears ?
What music around thee is rising ?
What orient notes unknown ?
O out on the sea what is singing
By the lone—by the lone ?

VI.

In a maze he listen'd unmoving
Thro' the long sweet summer-night
To the song of the water-kelpie,
Till the moon sank out of sight ;
And the kitchen maids of the castle
Found him, at break of day,
As they thought, on the ramparts, drunken :
He was fey—he was fey !

VII.

And the thrall of a lordly ambition,
And the combat for lands and gold,
And titles and trinkets of honor,
And things that are bought and sold,
O thereafter he held them so lightly !
But aye as he went on his way,
Of a song he would be singing :
He was fey—he was fey !

VIII.

The chieftain of all most gentle,
Most ready with loyal sword,
But not in the years did he prosper,
And he fail'd of the World's reward ;
His king gave his lands to a stranger,
And his lady was faithless, they say ;
And he died in a battle, forgotten—
Well-a-day—well-a-day !

IX.

Comes something akin to a feeling
That no language of men can define,
Not to one in a million revealing
Its meaning by symbol or sign,
But told of in Sagas and olden
Legends, of longing and weir—
A sound in a silence too golden
For many to hear.

X.

Moments remote, unimagin'd,
That come and go in a breath,
Thro' the light of long days uneventful,
In the pallor of imminent death ;
In the fire of some red revolution,
Perchance in the tapers' shine
On some extravagant altar,—
Some say in wine.

XI.

No matter, if only—if only
That sound from the silence it brings ;
That ray from the occult reunion
Found in the finish of things ;
Unfitted thereafter, exalted,
Uncaring, they pass among men,
And the World, as they knew it, is never
The same again.

XII.

Once, in the dull way of mortals,
As I lay in a stupor, I felt,
As I fancied, the palpable portals
Of darkness commingle and melt
Away into moonlit gardens,
Hidden forever from day :
Ah ! from them I never would waken,
Could I stay—could I stay !

XIII.

Could I dream within arbors Lethean,
Where the poppies that nod to the night
Have yielded at last to the perfume
Of roses enchantingly white ;
Where Morphia lies, and her lore is
Reveal'd, and her secrets are told
In fragments of fathomless stories
Forgotten of old !

XIV.

O souls made fit for the losing
Of all that the World implies,
Yet who tread not the pathway of heroes,
Nor of saints that agonize,
What vision is this that you treasure
Like children, until you are gray ?
Elusive, alluring forever,—
Who can say—who can say ?

LONESOME BAR

I.

OUT of the North there rang a cry of Gold !
And all the spacious regions of the West,
From rugged Caribou to where the crest
Of Mexican Sièrras mark the old
Franciscan frontiers, caught the regal sound,
And echo'd and re-echo'd it, till round
The eager World the rumor of it roll'd :
How Eldorado once again was found
Where stretch Canadian plains, forlorn and rude,
Hard upon the iron-temper'd Arctic solitude.

II.

Then woke the vanguard of adventurers,
Who fret their souls against the trammel'd ways
And measur'd hours of these exacting days ;
They heard the call—the pirate call that stirs
To reach for easy gold in regions new ;
That once from lazy Latin cities drew
Pizarro and his pious plunderers,
And, later, many a buccaneering crew
To sail their curly ships across the foam
And loot the Spanish galleons upon the run for home.

III.

So rake the annals of the knave Romance—
The breed will not die out ! The fatal stars

That sway the line of loose Irregulars
Forevermore 'gainst hazard circumstance,
Illumin'd thro' those triple golden years
A trail of splendid hopes and ghastly fears,
Where only now Aurora gleams askance
On the twinkling frosted bones of pioneers ;
But it's ho ! for savage lands alight with spoil—
For ventures grim and treasure-trove on a stark,
unheard-of soil !

IV.

And I went with the crowd who took the trail
Over the icy Chilcoot ; side by side
Who tugg'd and toil'd and topp'd the White Divide,
Rafted it to Tagish, and set sail
Down the rapid Yukon long before
The main rush reach'd the mines. 'Twas no more
To me than some new game of head-and-tail
To gamble on ; but we drank deep, and swore,
Around uproarious camp-fires, that we'd find
Our fortunes on the Klondike creeks or leave our
bones behind.

V.

But somehow I was hoodoo'd from the first ;
Tho' everywhere I saw the yellow glance
Of other's gold, I seem'd to stand no chance
Locating claims ; the hot, mosquito-curst
And scurvy days went empty-handed by,
No matter what I'd do where I'd try ;

And every day in passing seem'd the worst,
Until the last day faded from the sky,
And the long, inexorable Night had come,—
Interlock'd with cold, and weird stars, and dumb as a
corpse is dumb.

VI.

I work'd awhile that Winter on a lay ;
Sixty below, and sleeping in snow-bank'd tents,—
Say, that was the hardpan of experience !
Just earning enough to live, and make a play
On some infernal card that never won ;
Or easy by some dance-hall beauty done
For all the dust I had—you know the way :
Snow-blind once, once frozen to the bone,
While mushing with the mails between the creeks ;
Then typhoid laid me on my back delirious for weeks.

VII.

The river-ice was breaking in the Spring
When first I heard them tell of Lonesome Bar,—
A haggard region hidden in the far
Blank reaches of the North past reckoning.
But the Sun was warm again, 'twas afternoon,
And I was lounging in the Log Saloon,
Ready to turn my hand to anything,
When in two strangers came with a tale that soon
Drew round the restless crowd, forever fond
Of newer strikes, and farther fields, and the luck of
things beyond.

VIII.

And well within an hour the rush began,
For the strangers spoke of fortunes in a day ;
Careless show'd us nuggets that would weigh
A pound or more, and told how every man
At Lonesome Bar had sacks of them. Stampede !
Already the sleds are out, and the huskies lead,
Uneasy at their traces in the van,
And yelping 'gainst the time the packers need :
Stampede ! Stampede ! All hangs on the moment's
haste,—
And it's every man and dog for himself on the endless
Arctic waste !

IX.

But the fever shook me still in every bone ;
Times I'd feel my legs bend under me,
And every sinew loosen utterly ;
And so I fell behind. Yet all alone
I mush'd along for a month as best I could,
And every mile I made was to the good,
For the trail of those ahead in the bleak unknown
I'd savvy enough to keep. At last I stood
One day on a rocky bluff, outworn and weak,
And saw beneath me Lonesome Bar, at the bend of
Boulder Creek.

X.

Ah ! well I mind the evening that I came !
The month was June, nigh ripen'd to July,

And the hour was midnight, yet the Western sky
From the horizontal Sun was all aflame,
When with my empty pack I sauntered down
The one long tented street that made the town,
Hungry and sick—sick of a losing game,
And broke for the price of a whiskey-straight to
drown

The ragged thoughts a-limping thro' my brain—
Till I saw a crowd and went beside to hear what news
again.

XI.

And there was a gaunt old ruffian, shaggy-brow'd,
Who on a barrel, as far as I could tell,
Ranted in drunken ecstasy of Hell !
They suited well his theme—that Klondike crowd :
Men dogg'd by shadows of despair and crime,
With women reckless of all aftertime ;
Miners, traders, villains unavow'd,
And nondescript of every race and clime ;
With the red police of Canada beside—
For they keep tab on everything clear down to the
Arctic tide.

XII.

But Hell ! What use had I for Hell that night ?
And sullen I turn'd away, when I felt a whack
From a heavy open hand upon my back,
And, turning quick, my doubtful eyes caught sight
Of a college chum of mine—one Julien Roy—
Whom I'd not seen for years. Christ ! 'twas joy

To see the face of him again, and, quite
In his old way, to hear him say, "Old boy !
You're down on your luck I see ! Come on up town,
Where we can talk and have something to eat, and
something to wash it down !"

XIII.

'Twas like the sudden shining of the Sun !
The flowers forgotten of old fellowship
Went all abloom again,—there seem'd to slip
A weight of wasted years and deeds ill-done
Plumb down and out of my life, with chance to try
The upward trail again, where he and I
Could venture yet the highest to be won,
Could let the very thought of failure die,
And weave into our lives, from ravell'd ways,
That cord of gold we talk'd about in the far-off college
days.

XIV.

For Julien was a gentleman all through ;
He stak'd me then, when I had not a cent,
Braced me up and shared with me his tent,
And help'd in every way a friend could do.
As to the fortune that is ours to-day,
I stumbled on it in the chancy way
That all things come to me ; I cut in two
The likeliest claim I found, ask'd Jule to stay,
And work it with me, share and share alike,—
And in a month at Lonesome Bar 'twas rank'd the
richest strike.

XV.

One day I left him working on the claim,
I had to buy supplies down at the Bar,
When passing by the dance-hall Alcazar,
Topmost on its board I read a name,
“ Beulah, the Singing Girl ” ! The lesser lights,
The Dogans, with Obesity in tights,
And the boneless Acrobat—same old game—
’Twas not for them I stay’d, nor clownish sights,
But I wanted to hear a song—a song to make
The feel of younger days come back until my heart
should ache.

XVI.

Something went wrong with me that night, I know ;
And yet ’fore God I would not set it right
For all the North and all its gold in sight !
White she was all over, like the snow
That on the glacier in the moonlight lies,
And lissome as a panther when it spies
Its quarry where the forest branches low ;
But the luring of her deep-illumin’d eyes,
And voice voluptuous with all desire,
And somewhat else beyond all that fair set my soul
on fire.

XVII.

For Beulah sang a ballad to me then,
Of perilous tune, so put to velvet rime,
’Twas sure the kind that sirens in old time
Sang from the weedy rocks to sailor-men ;

And all the while her eyes shone splendidly
At something far too fine for us to see ;
But oh ! at the ending of the ballad, when
Those eyes sank down to rest alone on me,
Full well for one such glance of hers I knew
I'd tip my hat to her command for all that a man
may do.

XVIII.

And so enamor'd on the instant grown,
I sprang to meet her when the song was done ;
She met me wondrous kind ; then one by one
The others drew aside, while we, alone,
Crush'd from the moments, in our eagerness,
A wine of many years, as one would press
Sudden the ripen'd grapes. Ah ! we had known,
In some strange way that I'm too old to guess,
A dream of life between, I know not how,
That link'd her alien soul to mine with a dream out-
lasting vow !

XIX.

You know how goes the custom of the Camp ;
How swift the wooing where the pace is set
To live all in the hour—and then forget !
The midnight moon shone pale, like an onyx lamp
Hung in the amber twilight of the sky,
When we went forth together, she and I,
And open'd yellow wine, whose yellow stamp
Won high approval from the rascals dry

Who pledg'd us o'er and o'er, upon the chance
To waste in regions barbarous that vintage of old
France.

XX.

The first ones of the North still tell of it :
That was the night the Lucky Swede made bold
To bid for Beulah all her weight in gold ;
And when, from mere caprice, my side she quit,
And challenged him to make the offer good,
With iron pans and a beam and a chunk of wood
A rough-and-ready balance soon was fit,
And the Swede brought up his gold where Beulah
stood,
And 'gainst her weight upon the other scale
He piled his buckskin-sacks, while I—saw red, but
watch'd the sale.

XXI.

In all my life I never felt so broke ;
But when the balance quiver'd evenly,
She threw a kiss to him—and came to me,
And my heart went all a-tremble as she spoke :
“ Olè, you're a sport alright—for a Swede !
But I think this Sourdough here's the man I need ;
I only play'd to leave him for a joke ;
Let's call it off—and the drinks on me ! Agreed ? ”
Since then for me there's been no other girl—
And all the boys shook hands on it, and things began
to whirl.

XXII.

And it's something worth, even in memory,
To linger thro' those ample hours again.
It may not be the same with other men,
But clear on the topmost waves of revelry
The soul of me was lifted cool and clean,
Silent—to feel the surge of what had been :
Content—to weigh the evil yet to be :—
Then Beulah's arms closed warm and white between,
And I let go of all in her embrace,
And for a time escaped from Time and the latitudes
of Space.

XXIII.

And the last was a sense of sound—a tremulo,
So vagrant, sweet and low, 'twas like the thin,
Continual twinkling tune of a mandolin
To mellow-toned guitars in Mexico,
Where lovers pace the plaza by the sea ;
Where the deep Pacific phosphorescently
Goes rolling smoothly 'neath the Moon, as tho'
The influence of her yellow witchery
Thro' all the sparkling waters off the Main
Had sunken, sunken, drunken down like limitless
champagne.

XXIV.

Slowly I woke. The last of the stars had fled :
Only beside me Beulah murmur'd "Stay!"
And kiss'd me, sleepy-eyed. But early day

Chills all of that somehow ; I turned instead,
Thinking to leave her dreaming, I confess ;
Yet even in that gray light her loveliness,
And certain drowsy dulcet words she said,
Charm'd my heart to hers in a last caress—
Chained if you like, and clinch'd with a parting smile—
What then ? In the round of the World I've found
naught else so well worth while.

XXV.

Far up a valley, where the summer-rills
Long ages thro' the glacial-drift have roll'd,
I work'd in gravel studded thick with gold
For days and days on the double-shift that kills.
Yet oft, to hear the echoes ring and stir
That vacant valley like a dulcimer,
I flung her name against the naked hills,
And crimson'd all the air with thoughts of her ;
While 'mong the fair returning stars I'd see
Pale phantoms of her chill, sweet face receding
endlessly,

XXVI.

Till I could stand the pull of it no more ;
I, who as a fool knew every phase
Of woman's lighter love, and love's light ways,
Had felt no passion like to this before.
As the lost drunkard's longing at its worst,
And keen as the craving of the opium-curst,
Was the elemental lust that overbore

My very body till it gasp'd athirst,
As one in some fierce desert dying dreams
Of snowy peaks and valleys green with unavailing
streams.

XXVII.

And Julien, good old Julien, knowing all,
Pretended not to know, but said he guess'd
That I had overwork'd myself, and best
Lay off a spell in town. Then I let fall
My useless tools, and wash'd and got in trim
For the long ten miles ahead. The trail was slim,
And crawl'd at times 'gainst some sheer granite wall,
Or lost itself 'mong boulders huge and grim ;
But dreaming of her I pick'd a buoyant way,
Descending easy to the Bar at ending of the day.

XXVIII.

That region was abandon'd years ago,
And Lonesome Bar is to the wild again,
Yet still it haunts me as I saw it then :—
Far up in the banner'd West a crimson glow,
And a silver crescent on its edge aslant,
With jewell'd Venus sinking jubilant
Thro' opal spaces of the vault below ;
Then goblin rocks and waterfalls and scant
Green tamarac around the white marquee
Where Beulah lodg'd—and there was ending of the
trail for me.

XXIX.

Ending of the trail—for she was there !
Sylph-like I saw her figure thro' the haze
Made of the twilight and the camp-fire blaze ;
And the piney odors passing thro' the air
So pure I took for random kisses blown
From her red mouth to mine, while yet unknown
My whereabouts ; then wholly unaware
I stole upon her standing there alone,
And sudden she was mine without appeal,
And lip to lip within my arms made all my fancies
real.

XXX.

Shall I forget the words she said to me ?
Nay, I believ'd them—I believe them yet !
She told me how she dream'd that we had met
Where dreams are true ; and then how endlessly,
Like some lost dove, she roamed this evil world
Seeking for me ; how now her wings were furl'd,
And I should bide with her, till I should see
This whitest secret in her soul impearl'd ;
And her songs were all for me, I heard her say,—
For me, for me and only me, forever and a day !

XXXI.

Then pass'd the last good hours I ever knew ;
I lit my pipe, sat on a log, and look'd
At her and her neat hands that neatly cook'd
A supper hot and homely—just for two ;

And out in God's sweet air, beside the fire,
Where comrade ways but strengthen'd Love's desire,
We made it up to marry then for true,
And I thought how all my life I'd never tire
Of loving her, her eyes, her voice, her form,
Her charm of something unreveal'd forever young
and warm.

XXXII.

But at last, as night drew on, she rose and said :
"I'd talk with you till dawn, dear, if talk
Could hold my audience or charm the clock,
But I musn't miss my turn, so come ahead !"
Down at the theatre the crowd was thin,
Perhaps two score, no more, as we went in ;
But the manager was hanging out his red
Big-letter'd signal-lantern to begin,
When from the street, crescendo, came a roar,
Nearer and still nearer, till it reach'd the dance-hall
door.

XXXIII.

Beulah stood ready on the stage, and the black
Professor at the crack'd piano play'd
His overture twice through, but no one stay'd,
So I joined in where all were crowding back
To where the row was on. "Speech, Mac, speech !"
They cried, as up the aisle they rush'd to reach
Where Beulah stood, confused. "It's Hellfire
Mac !"

I whisper'd her, "and he's drunk and wants to
preach!"

"What! why sure—whoever he is—come dear,
That lets me off for a while you know; come on—
come on in here!"

XXXIV.

And laughing softly she drew me aside
Into a rough alcove, her dressing-room,
Curtain'd from the stage, and half in gloom,
When at a sound her eyes 'gan staring wide,
And she clutch'd my arm. 'Twas not the pious
drone,

But a fearsome something in the undertone
Of the ruin'd Calvinist, whose soul espied
Damnation toppling from the great White Throne
Upon the woeful habiters of Earth,

That somehow check'd the crowd that night, and
still'd its shallow mirth.

XXXV.

And Beulah, more than all like one entrall'd,
Smother'd a moan, and dumbly motioning
For me to follow, crept into the wing
Close up to him. Bearded, gray and bald,
With eyes sunk gleaming under beetling shag,
And face rough-chisel'd like a granite crag,
He tower'd above us all; but so appall'd

He seem'd that scarce his drunken tongue could
drag
Meet words to match his ghastly fantasies,
Yet I remember some in Gaelic accents drawn like
these :

XXXVI.

“Last night, my friens, she dreamp't she was a snake,
Prodigious as wass nefer seen before :
Ha, ta Mac an Diaoul !—ta Peishta-Mor !
For when she moved she made ta mountains quake,
And all ta waters of ta oceans roll
In frightnet waves from Pole to frozen Pole ;
While efermore her starving body'd ache
So bitterly ta pain she couldna thole,
But twistit round and round, till she was curl'd
In endless coils of blastit flesh about ta blastit World.

XXXVII.

“For in those days she was ta only thing ;
There wass no man nor woman left at all ;
No fish to swim, no beast to run or crawl,
No bird nor butterfly to spread its wing ;
Around ta World herself wass all alone,
For all that efer lived to her had grown ;
And Winter, that would nefermore be Spring,
Now glowert silent ofer every zone :
Then liftit she her head into ta sky
To spit ta last great blasphemy into God's face—
and die.

XXXVIII.

“ But oh ! ta silence of ta endless sky—
And oh ! ta blackness of ta endless Night !
Where all ta stars can nefer make it light—
Where in ta empty, like a Defil’s eye,
Ta eerie Sun, grown small and smooth and cold,
Stared down upon her doom ordain’d of old !
And she torment—and she couldna tell forwhy—
With agonies in every quaking fold,
Where only flowit poison streams for blood :
And still she hiss’d and spit and curst—and still there
wass no God !

XXXIX.

“ But at ta last she felt ta power to make
Ta great escape, and finish all her hurt ;
Ta Spirit moved her, and her body girt
Its straining coils until ta World she brake
To splinter’d rocks that ground and crash’d and
roar’d,
While all ta inner fires reek’d and pour’d
In fury round ta universal Snake—
Consuming in ta vengeance of ta Lord ! ”
We never heard the meaning of his dream,
For sudden thro’ the building rang a wild hysterick
scream.

XL.

And Beulah springing frenzied to the stage,
And the old man halting face to face with her,

Too swift and strange for any theatre
Follow'd a scene whose measure none could gauge,
Only we felt its mad reality.

“That man's my father—keep him back from me ! ”
I heard her cry, while horror blent with rage
Upon the other's face. “A fient I see !
A damit fient of Hell, who stole my name !
Beulah, ta harlot, come again to cross my face with
shame ! ”

XL.I.

I saw the old man lay rough hands on her ;
I saw her choking, and her white hand dart
Down to the knife that flash'd—and found his heart !
I saw him reel and fall—I saw the blur
Of blood that gush'd upon her heaving breast
Out of his own ! Ah ! God, how quick the rest !
Ere I or any one of us could stir,
Full to the hilt that fatal knife she press'd
Into her side, that ran and reek'd with red,
As she fell dead upon the stage where lay her father
dead.

XL.II.

Moments there are that gleam beyond all Time !
Blown from enormous Years ! O name that seems
To hearken back thro' vague primeval dreams !
O maid remember'd from the young, sublime,
Untrammel'd days when God foregathered us !
My woman still—grown strangely perilous !
All in a moment marr'd with scarlet crime,

And lost before mine eyes incredulous !
My woman still—tho' I go babbling dazed
At thought of her and her father damn'd, and a Hell
of things gone crazed !

XLIII.

How since that hour again and yet again
I've play'd the fool with Death ! Go let him take
What shape he please, I'll meet him wide awake,
And keep a date with him—no matter when !
Mad, I tell you—mad, I've laughed to hear
In Wintertime the mad gray-wolves draw near
And circle round me, all unarm'd—and then,
Snapping their teeth, slink back and howl with fear :
God knows of what ! So queer it seem'd, almost
I think they saw beside me there old Hellfire's
drunken ghost !

XLIV.

Lonesome Bar ! Too far—too far and old
The hollow sound of it now comes to me
To quicken this sick heart that crazily
Goes lurching on to everlasting cold !
Fill up my glass ! What game have I to play
But drink into this drear, indifferent day,
Some brief delirium, wherein to hold
A phantom floating goldenly away
Beyond the zenith of my soul, as bright
Aurora with her dreamlight haunts the hopeless Arctic
night !

THE WRONG WAY

I.

I WOKE to find me lying in
A lonely desert place,
Where ever-shifting silver sands
Caress'd my hands and face ;
Of hill or tree or human thing
I saw no sign or trace.

II.

But the lovely dreams that children dream
Were never half so fair :
Oh to that lone awakening
I can no thing compare !
I laugh'd for mere delight to breathe
The moving golden air.

III.

I kiss'd my naked arms, my heart
With subtle rapture beat
When shapely hands, blue-vein'd and wan,
I laid upon my feet :
The trickling sands upon them seem'd
Like waters cool and sweet.

IV.

And loosely I was clad in white,
With a girdle at my waist ;
And from my soul seem'd every stain

Of care and pain effaced :
A nodding wreath of poppy flowers
Upon my brow was placed.

V.

And long I look'd in silence o'er
The silvery expanse ;
Anon with music's soft employ
I did my joy enhance :
No siren e'er had sweeter voice
To give it utterance.

VI.

But that—ah that would not suffice—
The more I sang the more
Methought the sands alluringly
Did beckon me explore
What splendid city lay beyond—
What foam-besprent sea-shore !

VII.

Then up I rose and sought the West,
Wherein the Sun declin'd ;
And light and merrily I flew,
While ever blew behind,
Outspreading wide my yellow hair,
A perfume-laden wind.

VIII.

On and on and ever on,
With white, untiring feet ;

And over sands interm'nable
Ne'er fled gazelle so fleet
To find what faery thing might be
Where sky and desert meet.

IX.

How many a sore and stricken heart
Might then have envied me
That soothing, virgin desert land !—
So lonely and so free !
Seclusion sweet commingled all
With sunlit liberty.

X.

And soon with scarce a motion of
My own I smiled to find
How all unstriving I did fly :—
Then reckless I resign'd
My body as a burden blithe
Unto the eager wind.

XI.

And on and on and ever on
I held my steady way ;
And felt the passion of that flight
No distance might allay ;
Not e'en the stars' sweet benison
At ending of the day.

XII.

But with amaze I saw at last
How huge the Sun did shine ;
And this also I marvell'd o'er—
It did no more decline,
But red and eerie linger'd on
The far horizon line.

XIII.

Yet on and on and ever on
The silver sands I spurn'd,
Till in the nearing Western sky
My ghastly eye discern'd
What awful flames were writhing where
The seeming Sun had burn'd.

XIV.

And from those flames there rear'd aloft
Envenom'd smoke and fume ;
Riven by many a fiery streak
The pitchy reek did loom
Prodigious thro' the night that lour'd
Above that Pit of Doom.

XV.

Then went the sands to ashes gray
That smoulder'd 'neath my feet ;
The wind, a tempest horrible,
Now baffled all retreat ;

And soon upon my blanched face
I felt the searing heat.

XVI.

The wreath of scarlet poppy-flowers
Fell withering and dead ;
The scars upon my burning brow
Were scarlet now instead ;
My girdle to a serpent turn'd,
With fang'd and fiery head.

XVII.

And all my hair, now raven-black,
And monstrous over-grown,
That sheer against the falling night
With drear affright had flown,
Around me in all strangling shapes
Of Horror now was blown.

XVIII.

Till came the end where seems no end,—
My body sway'd and whirl'd
Frantic on the lurid edge
Where Hell doth hedge the World ;—
Then down the scarlet Pit of Doom,
Shrieking to God, was hurl'd !

THE RIME OF JACQUES VALBEAU

I.

One August afternoon I saw,
Somewhere back of Ottawa,
Among the oldest hills,
A young and most alluring squaw,
Togg'd in a buckskin petticoat,
With buckskin fringe and frills :
Catamount-claws were at her throat,
Fixt on a catgut string,
With copper beads and color'd quills,—
O she was the dreamliest thing !
Clean and cool as the dews that cling
To the tiger-lilies on those hills
Thro' the golden August dawns ;
For the rest—the sunlight gleam'd
On breasts and arms and legs that seem'd
Moulded brownly out of bronze :
Shapely, slender, debonaire,
From her coils of blue-black hair
To her dainty mocassins :
And I met her, for my sins,
Somewhere back of Ottawa,
Among the oldest hills.

II.

Long ago in the earlies
A Frenchman lived in France ;
Gaunt he was like an eagle,

With an evil eagle glance :
One eye was black and one was blue,
And the black one look'd straight into you,
 While the blue one leer'd askance,
 Most sinfully in Paris.
But it was wiser not to try
 To hinder him or harass,
But quietly to pass him by,
 In the sinful streets of Paris ;
For his arm was strong, and his sword was long,
 And when he made sword-plays,
'Twas hard to look him the eye,
 Because he look'd two ways ;
The black one look'd straight into you,
And the blue one where he'd pink you through,
And that was a trick entirely new
 To people then in Paris.
O he had small fears of the musketeers
 Or the macaroons of Paris !
And he had his time, and he made most free,
And he lived in great ribalderie,
 In the sinful streets of Paris ;
But at last those evil eyes in his head
On whom they fell, or so 'tis said,
 Brought such annoy and harass,
That when King Louis heard of it,
 He order'd him from Paris :
Yes ; not for the evil life he led,
 Nor the ways that he walk'd unfit,

But for those two evil eyes in his head,
They press'd him out of Paris.

III.

'Twas long ago in the earlies,
And he thought to take a chance
For fortune in the fur-trade,
So he sail'd away from France,
In a crooked ship, with a crooked deck,
That sprang a leak and went to wreck
Five hundred miles from our Quebec,

At the mouth of our Saint Lawrence.

How then he fared I do not know,
'Twas long ago, but this is so,
That up the river, paddling slow,
Half-starv'd, at length he reach'd Quebec,
And told his tale of dismal wreck,—
His name was Jacques Valbeau.
Now in those days in our Quebec
Nigh all the folk were pious,
And when they saw his one black eye,
With the blue one on the bias,
They cross'd themselves, and wish'd the rogue
Had drown'd 'tween there and Paris.
Yet money is made in the fur-trade,
When others hunt the fur,
And some thought best that they should test
This lank adventurer ;
And so they offer'd to subscribe

Enough to outfit and equip
Jacques Valbeau for a hunting trip
With some of the Huron tribe.
Thus did he go, this Jacques Valbeau,
And for many days he studied the ways
And the words of the Huron tribe.

IV.

Yes ; money is made in the fur-trade
When others hunt the fur,
But brandy to the Indians
If you want the best of fur,
And everything else they have to show ;
'Tis a law you know, and Jacques Valbeau
Was its discoverer.
So for many days he studied the ways
And words of every tribe.
Of money had he not a sou markee,
But he carried a bottled bribe. [some,
And the Moon turn'd round, and he prosper'd
With beaver-skins and such,
That he got for his brandy, and then for rum,
And the gin of the heretic Dutch.
But me it would take too long to describe
How things went bad in every tribe
Which the Church had held in check ;
But sure there was trouble plenty too much
In our dear old Quebec.
So the Bishop and the Governor,

Who sometimes did agree,
They met and talk'd the matter o'er,
 And settled finally
That they would have this Jacques Valbeau
 And hang him by the neck
Up on the windy citadel
 Of our dear old Quebec.
But so it is, and so it is,
 And one can never tell,
For in the Garden Ursuline
That evil-eyed Valbeau had seen
An Indian girl turned seventeen,
 A sweet young sauvagesse,
Left with the Lady Prioress
To learn to sew, and cook nice food,
And tell her beads, and to confess,
 And otherwise be good.
But Jacques Valbeau, that Jacques Valbeau,
 He signall'd her so well
In forest ways she understood,
 That just at vesper-bell
Of that same evening long ago
She slipt away into the wood :—
 O wicked Jacques Valbeau !

v.

So Jacques took to the wilderness,
 The first coureur-de-bois,
And with him went that Indian girl,

Whose convent-name was Lottilà—
With the accent on the “aw.”
I have heard her other name, but now
I will not try to tell it,
Because I can’t, and ’cause there are
No letters that will spell it.
But oh ’twas the good, good time they had
Thro’ the woods in the summer weather !
Hunting and fishing and trading in furs,
And they were so rich together,
Until one night as they lay asleep,
Where the moss was growing thick and deep,
'Gainst the trunk of a fallen tree,
The Iroquois Indians silently
Began to creep and creep
In a closing circle where they lay,
Till scarce they were more than three yards away.
Then a twig did snap with a warning crack ;
Upsprang that valiant rover, Jacques,
All in an instant wide awake,
And three of those Iroquois heads did break
Before they had him down. Alack !
They tied his hands behind his back
And fixt him to a stake ;
And his bottles of Jamaica rum
They drank till they were drunk.
And while the squaws began to plunk
With rattly sticks on the big tum-tum
(That’s a sort of Indian drum),

The braves did time and music make
With yells and grunts and squawks,
And danced around him at that stake,
With painted cheek and horrible head,
And pine-knot torches burning red,
And ugly tomahawks ;
And told him how his scalp they'd take,
And otherwise keep him awake
Until the blessed day should break,
Then cut him into blocks,
And finally his body bake,
When sure that it no more could ache,
And eat his heart when he was dead.
Of these details, perhaps, I've said
Too much—the subject shocks.

VI.

But so it is, and so it is,
And one can never tell ;
For on Valbeau the flesh did sizz,
And he began to yell,
When the Devil, moving mightily
Somewhere down in Hell,
Did cause a terrible earthquake,
And all of Canada did shake
From Ottawa to Rimouski.
(This happen'd in sixteen sixty-three,
And it's all set out in history.)
But Jacques Valbeau stood swarthily,

And desperate at the stake,
And called the Devil to his aid,
While all the Indians, dismay'd,
Took to their naked knees and pray'd,
And the ground kept heaving heavily.
Yes, all took to their knees and pray'd,
But Lottilà, the little squaw,
Who, with no thought but her lover's life,
Cut thro' his thongs with a scalping-knife,
While the ground kept heaving heavily.
And then was that great bargain made
As Jacques Vilbeau stood swarthily ;
He call'd the Devil to his aid,
And the Devil, moving mightily
Somewhere down in Hell,
Roar'd reply, so I am told,
That Jacques Valbeau, the overbold,
And Lottilà as well,
If they would do his will alway,
Should laugh at Time and never grow old,
And none should hinder them or check,
Whether at work or whether at play,
Free to come and free to go
Thro' all the Province of Quebec
And the borders of Ontario—
Down to the Judgment Day !

VII.

Then Jacques Valbeau and Lottilà,
So the Iroquois declare
(And I have cause to think 'tis true),
While others crouch'd all in despair,
Follow'd a ball of fire that ran
Down to the river near St. Anne,
Till it stopt by a big canoe ;
And Lottilà she fainted there,
And fell in that big canoe,
And Jacques, half dead, he fell there too.
Then it rose of itself in the spectral air,
And far out of sight it flew.
How long it was they never knew,
It may have been days, but Jacques came to,
And found they were still in the big canoe,
Hovering over a landscape fair,
Late in the afternoon.
And it floated aimless, here and there,
But Jacques Valbeau had ready wit,
And he sat and consider'd the matter a bit,
Till with a paddle soon
He caught the trick of sailing it,
Slowly at first and cautiously,
But at last he sail'd as joyously
As any bird on the wing ;
While Lottilà woke up to sing
To the end of the afternoon.
Then a down-worn mountain they did see,

From whose green covering
The granite ribs sagg'd outwardly ;
It seem'd some monstrous ancient thing
Crouching wearily.
But on its summit they did light,
And made their camp there for the night ;
In later days, upon that site,
 But lower down the hill,
Jacques built a cabin large and strong,
And near to it a whiskey-still
 To make the whiskey-blanc.
And more I'd like to tell to you
Of how he did the Devil's will
 In that bewitch'd canoe,
But the tale of it would be too long,
 O much too long, indeed !
Yet in the parish-records you may read
How, with a drunken shanty-crew,
They saw him pass in that canoe,
Piercing the clouds with awful speed,—
 Let that be a lesson to you !

VIII.

So thus that August afternoon,
 Among those haunted hills,
I met that young bedevil'd squaw,
The luring, lissome Lottilà,
 Minding her whiskey-stills.
And truly I was glad to meet her,

Yet I am shy, and sometimes nervous,
And I wonder'd what excuse would serve us
 To know each other better ;
But lifting my hat to the brown young maid,
She smiled straight at me, unafraid,
 And presently began
To speak with pretty words that ran
Thro' English, French and Indian,—
 It was a lovely jargon ;
But she said no word of Jacques Valbeau,
Who with the Devil, long ago,
 Made such a splendid bargain ;
 So how was I to know ?
Now it's sometimes sweet to be indiscreet,
As for me I am never wise ;
So we sat us down on the warm, dry sod,
'Mid brown grass and golden rod,
 Watching the butterflies.
And she talk'd and talk'd, as I held her hand,
And when I could not understand
I look'd down deep into her eyes.
 Perhaps the thing sounds silly,
But think of the picture that she made,
 Array'd like a tiger-lily :
Her body brown and quivering
In that revealing petticoat,
With catamount-claws at her fine throat
 Fixt on a catgut string ;
And the copper beads and color'd quills,

Just that and her dainty mocassins,—
O she was the dreamliest thing !
And I met her, for my sins,
Somewhere back of Ottawa,
Among the oldest hills.

IX.

The sun was slipping down the sky,
Close to the green horizon,
When sudden I saw the fairest sight
That ever I set my eyes on :
A yellow canoe, with three of a crew,
Almost too fast to follow,
Straight out of the sky to the hilltop nigh,
Came skimming along like a swallow,
And then to the cabin, right below,
It slid with a motion easy and slow,
And a man stept out—already you know
'Twas Jacques Valbeau—'twas Jacques Valbeau !
Gaunt he was like an eagle,
With an evil eagle glance ;
His black eye look'd me through and through,
And his blue one leer'd askance ;
The front of his head had been tomahaw'd,
But part way down his back
His hair was flowing coarse and black,
Like the tail of a horse that is dockt ;
But he had a very engaging smile,
And I liked the way that he talked.

He was straight as an arrow when he walk'd,
And, after a little while,
I thought him a handsome man—almost,
And really quite a delightful host.
He introduced the other two
Who rode with him in the big canoe.
One was a fat little country girl,
With carroty hair in a tosell'd curl,
Her dolly eyes had tears at the rim,
And her face was pale as milk that is skim,
And she was a sad little girl.
The other guest was a shantyman,
Half drunk by the looks of him ;
But the shantyman was an Irishman,
And that is enough for him.
Then Lottilà and the country girl
Left us and went to the upper
Cabin above the whiskey-still,
To set the table for supper,
While we sat down in the red sunlight,
And listened to Jacques Valbeau
As he told prodigious stories
Of two hundred years ago,
Of all the old coureurs-de-bois
Dead so long ago,—
We still there in the red sunlight,
And they all underground.
Then I heard a sound, and I look'd around,
Then up where Lottilà

Was ringing a queer little oblong bell—
(Maybe 'twas just a cowbell,
Tho' I think 'twas silver, so clear and sweet
 The silver tone of it fell)—
And gladly we follow'd Valbeau to the upper
Cabin where we were to have our supper.
For me, I was more than ready to eat,
 And the supper was a dream.
We'd buttermilk and new potat,
And a roasted chicken, great and fat,
 With cauliflower in cream,
And a glass or two of whiskey-blanc,
Just to help the meal along,
And another glass, and after that
 Tabac de habitant.

X.

Upon my soul, I never knew
Just when we enter'd the big canoe,
The same as one can never keep
The moment clear one falls asleep.
But so it was until I found
We were no more upon the ground.
Now I at times am extremely nervous,
As I said before, and when I found
How that bewitch'd canoe did swerve us
Up and away from the solid ground,
With the hills a-sinking all around,
And we once more in the copper glim

Of the Sun we lost somewhat before,
Oh then, indeed, I thought small blame
To the frighten'd girl with the towsell'd curl,
And dolly eyes with tears at the rim,
And face all pale as milk that is skim—

I'll bet that my own was the same !
But the shantyman was too drunk, I think,
To know where we were—it's a beastly shame
The way those Irish drink.

XI.

Now remember aviation
Differs quite from navigation,
For always in the water
Of the river that you ride in,
Or be it smooth or rippy,
A canoe is very tippy,
And steadily you kneel.
But through the air you glide in
A fashion that you feel
It's a medium to confide in,
And you needn't keep a keel,—
That much I saw at a glance.
And tho' I'm not sufficiently wise
To make it clear, you can't capsize
So long as you properly balance,
Or rise by levitation.
Now, that's why aviation
Differs quite from navigation,

And I had begun to feel easy again,
And ready to take a chance,
When all of a sudden it started to rain
Right over our heads, and there was a growl
Of thunder far down in the West.
Then the Sun went out, and the wind 'gan howl,
And a storm came bounding along on the crest
Of the massy clouds, grown sulphurous,
And there was the blue zig-zag and flash
Of lightning, follow'd by instant crash
Of the thunder nearing us.
With that Valbeau began to sing,
While Lottilà did sway and swing
Her brown arms perilous :
 Gai faluron falurette,
 Gai faluron dondē !
I did the same but tremblingly,
And the Indian girl did grin with glee
To see how the white girl shrunk, [knee,
With her face in her hands and her head on my
 But the shantyman still lay drunk,
 So how could I put her away ?
It was all so characteristic !
 Gai faluron falurette,
 Gai faluron dondē !
Now, it's all very fine to sing that way
 When everything else is right,
But we sailed straight into a loaded cloud,
 So villainous anarchistic

It bang'd like tons of dynamite :—
For a time I was blind with the awful light,
 And deaf with the awful roar ;
I felt we were blown clean out of sight,
 And then I felt we had sunk
To the bottomless pit for evermore ;
 But the shantyman still lay drunk.
It makes me shiver to think of it now,
But after a bit I rallied somehow.
Valbeau was laughing at the bow,
 And he bent far back to speak :
“ Holà, monsieur ; comment ça va ? ”
To keep my face with Lottilà,
 I managed just to stammer :
“ Bully, Valbeau—c'est magnifique !
 But go where the clouds are calmer ! ”

XII.

We were up in a cool, sweet air,
 Under a wonderful sky,
Velvety dark and richly sown
With wonderful stars from zone to zone,
 And all of them seem'd so nigh,
But a little more, and we would play
Near the opal arch of the Milky Way,
 With the yellow Moon near by.
Then over the rim we look'd far down
 Where the World had vanish'd in ire,
Where fold on fold of the black clouds roll'd,

Roaring and fearful with fire,
And we rose from that Devil's crucible,
Like souls that are rising released from Hell,
To regions of glory and gold.
Higher and higher and higher !
And the air grew thin and cold :
But higher and higher and higher
I urged Valbeau to explore
Nearer and nearer that border of gold
And limit where mortals expire :
Higher and higher and higher !
While a million millions miles to the fore,
I watch'd the glint of a jewell'd door
In the Gardens of Desire :
Higher and higher and higher !
Till I was dazed and my breath was gone,
And I could see no more.

XIII.

When I came to myself we were sailing down,
And circling like a feather
In a slow descending spiral flight
Thro' mellow moonlit weather :
And the country girl croon'd with delight,
And claspt her hands together.
But still her head droop'd on my knee
As she claspt her hands together,
And so close were we that none could see
As I fool'd with a carroty curl :

Alas ! I admit my conduct was raw,
For my heart was all to Lottillà,

 But I kissed the other girl.

Now it's a great mistake, when up in the skies,
 To kiss the other girl,
Just for a pair of dolly eyes,

 Or a cute little carroty curl :
Yet not the slightest harm was meant,
With me it's a matter of temperament ;

 But the shantyman woke up !

 Oh, blast that Irish pup !
He woke and caught us in the act,
Just at the moment our lips had smackt,
And he went for me, hell-bent ;
Let out from his ugly throat a yell,
Told Lottillà just what he saw,

 And—before I had time to explain,
 Or argue against the fact—
 That fact so apparently plain—
They both made at me so savage I fell
 Without a chance to prepare !

And I fell, and I fell, and I fell—my Lord !
It's the awfulest feel to fall overboard

 From a canoe away up in the air ;
It's really too swift to describe or tell,
But first you feel you're out of it,

 And then you feel a thump,
And after that you're generally
 A most unlovely lump.
But in my case 'twas different,
My body was caught by a wind-current,

And it drove me sideways on,
With a muffled whack, 'gainst a big haystack,
And I tumbled it over and lay on my back
 Unconscious till the dawn,
 And so flat, flat, flat,
That when I arose in misery,
 A long time after that,
'Twas hard to remember where I was at,
 And I sigh'd lugubriously,
With my body so stiff and my head so sore,
It couldn't have hurt me any more
If I'd been out all night on a spree—

Gee !

XIV.

Now let me end, O bulbous friend !
 This rime ere I begin to
Tell other things irrelevant
Of venturings extravagant
 And mystery and sin too :
For I've had my time in every clime
 The Lord has led me into :—
But give me August, after all,
If I be free to roam and loll
Among those tiger-lily hills
 Back of Ottawa.
I am ready to risk whatever befall
To meet once more that little squaw,
The luring lissome Lotillà,
 Minding her whiskey-stills ;
To listen again to her pretty patois,

And hold her hand and hear her sing
Among those tiger-lily hills,

For she was the dreamliest thing !

Gai faluron falurette,—

I think I hear her yet,
Out there, in her buckskin petticoat,
With catamount-claws at her fine throat,

Fixt on a catgut string ;
And the copper beads and color'd quills,

And dainty mocassins,—

The girl who met me, for my sins,
Somewhere back of Ottawa,
The wanton town of Ottawa,

Among the oldest hills.

Gai faluron falurette,

Gai faluron dondè !

ON BEACON HILL,
BRITISH COLUMBIA

I.

Prone on a grassy knoll where runs the sea
In from the North Pacific, deep and blue,
Whose tide-ript waters many a century
But parted for the painted war-canoe,
Till Juan de Fuca and his swarthy crew
Sail'd on a treasure cruise to regions cold,
Idle I dream'd a summer evening through,
Watching the ruddy Western Sun enfold
The snowy-peak'd Olympians in transient gold.

II.

Our air hath yet some tang of Spanish days,
Some glow of stories fading from the past
Of pioneers, and wreckt and curious strays
From distant lands along this coast up-cast,
Since brave Vancouver, from his eager mast,
Beheld the island of his lasting fame,
And, veering to its pleasant shore, made fast
To raise our flag in George's royal name,
While group'd around his brawny tars gave loud acclaim.

III.

Across the rocky harbor-mouth still fall
Echoes to tell of England's easy crown,
And timely bugles from the barracks call
A challenge to the careless little town

That lies like a pretty maid in tatter'd gown
'Mid tangled gardens, tempting one to halt
Where gnarled oaks, with ivy overgrown,
Are all accord with her one charming fault—
So drowsy nigh the hidden guns of Esquimalt.

IV.

And nonchalant lay I that afternoon,
The air a scent of wild white-clover bore,
And I could hear the tumult and the tune
Of tumbling waves along the pebbled shore ;
Such gipsy joys to me were even more
Than chase of gold or fame ; but yet withal
I felt the first fine tremor o'er and o'er
Of some vast traffic without interval
To traverse soon these waterways imperial.

V.

Where now some tug-boat leaves a smoky trail
To pencil on the air a coiling blot
Athwart the lighthouse, or the infrequent sail
Of some slow lumber-bark, or vagrant yacht,—
Where glides some British cruiser, grimly wrought,
Beside the schooners from the Arctic seas,—
To largely feed the crowded world methought
Here soon shall pass great annual argosies
Full-freighted with the yield of prairie granaries.

VI.

And musing thus upon that gentle mound,
Far down the reach of waters to the right

I saw an Empress liner inward bound,
Speeding thro' the Narrows, trim and white,
And every moment growing on my sight,
Like something clear unfolding in a dream ;
Her very motion was a clean delight,
That woke the sapphire sea to curl and cream
Smoothly off her curving prow and snowy beam.

VII.

And easily as up the Straits she roll'd,
My fancy rambled over her to see,
Bulging richly 'gainst her steely hold,
Bales of flossy silk stow'd solidly
With matted rice and tons of fragrant tea ;
Or else, her quainter cargo fain to scan,
Wee China toys in silver filagree,
And cunning ivories of old Japan,
Pack'd with iris-woven rugs from Ispahan.

VIII.

All hail to her ! the white forerunner sent
From out the lavish West to rouse the old
Lethargic portals of the Orient,
Till all its stolid inhabitants be told
Of quick new modes of life, and manifold
Swift engines of exchange, and how by these
To run their times within a finer mould,
And from the rut of Chinese centuries
To reach for wider joys and soother luxuries.

IX

O sure it is no small thing to be said
That under us the East and West have met !
And our red route shall yet be perfected
Around the World, and our old flag shall yet
Much vantage o'er its younger rivals get,
Whether it wave from Windsor's kingly pile,
Or on the fartherst verge of Empire set,
'Bove fearless towns, whose heart-strings all the while
Shall thrill to every chord from their old Mother-isle

X.

We feel the centre now, where'er we stand,
And touch community in everything,
Since Science, with her patient, subtle hand,
Hath snar'd the Globe as in a witch's ring,
And set all elements a-quivering
To our desire. What marvels more she'll show—
What new delights from Nature conjuring—
Small wit have I to guess, but this I know,
That more and more the scattered World as one must grow.

XI.

Then closer blend for empire—that is power :
No thing of worth e'er came of feebleness,
And union is the genius of the hour.
The virtues that by master-craft and stress
Wrought hugely on primeval palaces,
And 'stonish'd Egypt and great Babylon
With monuments of admirable excess,

Seem once again from out Oblivion drawn
To lighten o'er the Earth in unexampl'd dawn.

XII.

We front the threshold of a giant age,
Foremost still, but others follow fast ;
We may not trust o'ermuch the written page,
Or measure with the measures of the past.
For all our millions, and our regions vast,
And arm'd array, in boastful numbers told,
To keep the treasures that our sires amass'd,
Hath need of statesmen lion-like to hold,
And still forestall the changing times, alert and bold.

XIII.

The impulse of a thousand centuries
Strikes upward now in our united race,
Not for a Roman triumph, but to ease
The intercourse of nations, and to place
The social fabric on a happier base ;
The very enginry of war abhorr'd,
So soon as may, is bended to erase
The stain and bloody ravage of the sword ;
The vanquish'd now are all to equal right restor'd.

XIV.

But cry contempt upon that sickly creed
That would not fire a shot to save its own,
Whose piety perverse doth only feed
The hope of leaner nations, bolder grown,
To tread the path that we have hewn alone :

'Twas not for them we found that path so hard—
'Twas not for them the Earth so thick was sown
With British dead ! Nay, rather let us guard
The barest rock that flies our flag at all hazard.

XV.

And e'en for the sake of rich and plenteous peace,
Let mastery in arms be honor'd still !
So only shall the fear of foemen cease.
For this is naked truth, say what they will,
That when a people lose the power to kill
They count for naught among the sons of men ;
Nor tongue, nor pen, nor art, nor workmen's skill
Can save their homes from alien ravish then,
Or lift their fallen capitols to place again.

XVI.

Then give us rifles—rifles everywhere—
Ready rifles, tipt with bayonets !
And men of iron to lead, who little care
For parlor tactics or for social sets ;
Red captains worthy of their epaulets ;
Not rich men's sons to make a passing show,
Lace-loving fops or wooden martinets,
But clear-eyed stalwarts o'er the ranks, who know
How best to train a naval gun or trap a foe.

XVII.

And tho' the burden and the fret of life
Still wear upon us with unequal weight,
We'll ne'er give way to fratricidal strife.

We are a people strong to tolerate,
Till form'd opinion tranquilly abate
The jagg'd abuses of an earlier age,
Rather than, impatient, emulate
Those hapless nations that in sudden rage
Of revolution wreck their ancient heritage.

XVIII.

Our Saxon temper, that 'gainst Church and Crown,
And tyrant Castles of the feudal plan,
Made steady way until it wore them down,
And straiten'd all their maxims till they ran
Current for the right of every man
Freely to change his state and circumstance,
Is virile yet unbrokenly to span
What gulf ahead, what unforeseen mischance,
Would threat the front of our magnificent advance.

XIX.

And we have those whose dreams of betterment
Outrun their fleeting day ; whose hearts ideal
Beat evermore against discouragement,
In high endeavor not to cease till all
The bars to opportunity shall fall
Within the Union of the British bred ;
Nor rest content until the mutual
Machinery of State be perfected,
So that no least of all our brethren go unfed.

XX.

I never saw Britannia carved in stone,
Or figured out in bronze, but loyally

I've thought what merit shall be all her own
In that great Brotherhood that's yet to be—
The diamond Empire of Futurity—
Whose equal citizens, all thron'd elate,
And treading each a sovran destiny,
Shall count it yet their pride and best estate
To steadily for commonwealth co-operate.

XXI.

Who'd be the bard of that triumphant time ?
Who hath the pen of promise, and the skill,
To tell its periods in exultant rhyme ?
For I am but a dreamer on a hill,
And prone withal fantastic hours to fill
With fancies running wild of thought, or gloat
Eerie on the rising Moon, until
Betimes I hear her dim harmonic note—
Boding of forbidden things and themes remote.

XXII.

But so a passing ship—a bugle call—
Did tempt me to essay a song of State
Beyond the range of my poor art, as all
You rank'd Olympians, that loom serrate
Against the azure upper air, are great
O'er this low hill. To them young Morning throws
His golden first largesse—there, lingering late,
Rose-mantled Eve her deep allegiance shows,
Glorious 'mid unconquer'd peaks and virgin snows.

THE CHILCOOT PASS

I.

Far up the Chilcoot Heights ! The solid snow,
Avalanch'd from Titan peaks that rise
In stony isolation 'gainst the skies,
Hath whelm'd all in soundless overthrow ;
And almost now the white and crusted mass
Hath choked the glacier's ghastly blue crevasse
That cleaves to everlasting cold below :
The wintry day declines ; and down the Pass,
Where Time hath fallen, desolate, asleep,
To mark the flight of Arctic hours gigantic shadows creep.

II.

But see ! Upon that perilous meagre trail,
There winding upward to a dazzling crest,
A miner inward-bound on Fortune's quest !
And tho' the sunlight's slanting weak and pale,
Tho' in the livid clouds a tempest lours,
And far above him yet the Summit towers,
He sees therein no sight to make him quail ;—
'Gainst any steep he'd pit his stubborn powers ;
He goes, as dauntless men have gone of old,
To play with Death in a land unknown for a stake of love
and gold.

III.

Steady he's toil'd for hours ; at last he makes
A moment's pause to shift his heavy pack,

The twisted straps chafe sore upon his back,
And with hard travel all his body aches.
But now it is he notes with some dismay
What little measure's left him of the day,
And how the air's ablur with thin white flakes ;
Yet up the Pass he takes one quick survey,
Then grimly on he goes with hastening stride,
For he must be over the Summit by night—he will sleep on
the other side.

IV.

Let others lag ; he'll on with the first of the rush !
Down rivers roaring into deserts bleak,
He'll pioneer his way to the richest creek—
He'll cut and thaw the frozen earth—he'll crush
Its hoarded treasure out—and he'll call his claim
“ The Little Annie ! ” For him that simple name
Lights up a dream of home returning flush
With store of yellow gold and golden fame ;
Bringing back the happy days once more
To a little girl left lonely on the lone Lake Erie shore.

V.

The gloom is deepening where the sunlight was ;
The flakes are falling faster now around ;
Far off he hears a shrill, foreboding sound,
And at its challenge makes another pause.
Awhile irresolute, with anxious eye
He gazes at the menace of the sky,
And from its hue reluctant warning draws :

The storm is nigh—he little dreams how nigh—
When cursing his labor lost he turns to go
Down again for shelter to the cabin far below.

VI.

Save your curses, man ! You walk o'erbold !
You go too slow and sullen down that path !
You may live and brave the coming wrath
In those tumultuous clouds above you roll'd !
Save your curses, man !—for now you'll need
Every breath your body has for speed ;
E'en now the air is struck with deathlier cold ;
E'en now the foremost furious winds are freed ;
Look !—look above you there at last,
And see the Heavens whirling downward, vague and white
and vast !

VII.

So—he knows !—too late, alas, he knows
His fierce pursuers, and with desperate leap
Goes plunging madly down the uncertain steep—
Down for his life ! Frantic now, he throws
His dragging pack away—his senses swim
With swift descent—the storm's o'ertaking him—
The drift in stinging clouds around him blows
To make him gasp and choke—his eyes grow dim—
Unto his very bones the cold he feels ;—
But down and down that fatal Pass, tho' dazed he leaps
and reels !

VIII.

Far up the Chilcoot Heights ! The storm is on :
He's struggling still, but now he's lost the trail,
And all his sturdy muscles flag and fail,
'Mid swirling snow, to shapes fantastic drawn
That pass like endless fleeing ghosts ; and each,
In passing, seems to hiss at him and reach
Long throttling fingers out ; sight is gone,
For his eyes see only white ; hark ! the screech
Of Artic winds swift leaping from the sky
Down like the souls of famish'd wolves—“ Oh Annie, lass !
—good-bye !

IX.

“ For now I'm play'd right out—I'm freezing fast—
I'm on the spot where I'll forever lie,
Just when I thought my chance had come—good-bye !
Good-bye ! my life is over now and past !
And it's been no use, tho' I've tried everywhere
To do the best I could, and do it square,
God's kept his grudge against me to the last,
And I've stood it now so long, I hardly care !
Let Him finish me up, right here, if he likes, and hurl
What's left of me to Hell !—But you !—O Annie—my
orphan girl ! ”

X.

White, white, white—all 'round 'tis white—
Blind white and cold ;—unheard is hurl'd
His last appeal 'gainst this relentless World :

No rescue now may come—no swift respite :
The minutes of his life are almost o'er.
He knows it well ;—see, he moves no more !
Body and soul can make no further fight,
Bewilder'd in the blizzard's maddening roar ;
But he's facing it—he's standing rigid there—
Defying Heaven's utmost wrath in reason-rack'd despair !

XI.

“ Blow, then, damn you—blow ! You've taken all !
You—whatever Thing you are that hears—
You've never once let up on me for years !
You've stript me stark and bare as a wooden doll !
And there's not a rag of comfort left ! You've blown
Every joy and every hope I've known
Roughly from my life ! And when I fall,
You'll howl above me, dying here alone !
Pile on—pile on, with your blasted, strangling snow !
You can take no more but my life now ! Blow ! God damn
you—blow !”

XII.

White, white, white,—unceasing white !
See ! he totters, yielding to his doom—
The snow hath ready made his shroud and tomb :
But what is that ? There breaks a sudden light
That startles him to last delirious cries ;—
Pinnacled athwart the awful skies,
Behold a treasure-lode, uncovered bright
In transient glory to his dying eyes !

On a towering peak the sunset clouds unroll'd,
And he's gasping at the cruel splendor—"Gold—gold—
gold!"

XIII.

Far up the Chilcoot Heights! A prostrate form,
Half-buried now and motionless, doth lie
All free of pain—and, happily, to die.
Listen! He's muttering thro' the passing storm :
"Home again, Annie—home again!
God! but it's restful—after that rattling train!
It's all so still and sunny here—and so warm!
How was it I came so soon? I can't explain—
Only I know I'm home; and oh! it seems
Too good to be true! Doesn't it, lass? And it's finer than
all my dreams!

XIV.

"You've grown so pretty since I've been away—
So tall and pretty—I almost seem to see
Your mother smiling there again at me,
Just like she look'd upon her wedding-day!—
A year before they laid her 'neath the grass,
And left me only you, my little lass!
Come closer to me—things grow dull and gray;—
My eyes were hurt in a blizzard on the Pass
The year I went away and left you, Pet!
What's making it dark so early, Annie? Surely it's not
night yet?

XV.

“ Oh ! well—no matter ! Whatever time it be,
I am one of the lucky ones, I’ve made my pile,
And I’m going to take it easy for awhile.
No more work or worry now for me ;
I’ve lots of gold—as yellow as your curls ;
And I’ll dress you fine again like the other girls,
And get you everything you want—you’ll see !
A ring like mother had—and a collar of pearls ;—
And I’ll buy—I’ll buy the old home back—that
they sold !
But it’s made your daddy old, dear—it’s made him feel
so old !

XVI.

“ Yes, I hear you laughing at me now !
But oh ! it’s good to hear you laugh again !
To have you near and have you laugh—and then,
I must look kind of funny, I’ll allow ;
These clothes of mine are all so patch’d and queer !
But I’ll have better ones to-morrow, dear ;—
And I know you love your old dad, anyhow !
I feel so tired, I think I’ll sleep just here :—
Kiss me, Annie !—there—good night, my lass ! ”
God rest the souls of the dead who lie on the Heights of the
Chilcoot Pass !

UNDERGROUND

I.

ON a queer, queer journey
I heard the queerest sound,—
'Twas the Devil with a banjo
In a cavern underground,
Where the merry, merry skeletons
Were waltzing round and round,
While the clicking of their bones kept time.

II.

Thro' a low, iron door,
With a huge iron bar,
A door perchance some careless
Imp had left ajar,
I crept behind a column cut
All out of Iceland spar,
And the carven angles twinkled frostily.

III.

I was frighten'd of the Devil,
And I wouldn't look at him,
But I watch'd a thousand goblins
From nook and cranny dim
A-glowering on the skeletons,
And every goblin grim
And ugly as an old gargoyle.

IV.

And bogles play'd on fiddles
 To help the banjo out,
For 'twas nothing but the music
 Kept alive that crazy rout ;
But the big green toads could
 Only hop about
To the rumbling of the bass bassoon.

V.

Behind the Iceland column
 I watch'd them on the sly,
Above them arch'd the cavern
 With its roof miles high,
All ribb'd with blue rock-crystal, shining
 Bluer than the sky,
And studded with enormous stalactites.

VI.

But the lovely floor below,
 With its level crystalline
Splendid surface spreading
 Radiantly green !—
As if a lone, impearled lake
 Of waters subterrane
Had frozen to a flawless emerald !

VII.

And down, down, down,
Its moveless depths were clear ;
And down, down, down,
In wonder I did peer
At lost and lovely imagery
Beneath me far and near,—
Silent there and white forevermore.

VIII.

But from the sunken beauty
Of that white imagery
Lissome shadows loosen'd,
Flame-like and fitfully,
That form'd anon to spheres serene
And mounted airily,
And broke in golden bubbles thro' the floor.

IX.

There, bubble-like, they vanish'd
Amid the whirling crew,
Yet left a radiance trailing
Slowly out of view,
That sometimes o'er the skeletons
Such carnal glamor threw,
It flatter'd them to human shape again.

X.

How long I watch'd I know not ;
The weird hours went on,
Lost hours that bring the midnight
No nearer to the dawn,
When suddenly I felt a clutch,
And swiftly I was drawn
From out behind that carven block of spar.

XI.

My soul !—a skeleton !—
A rattling little thing,
Twined itself about me
As close as it could cling !
And in its arms with horror I
Perforce 'gan circling,
Compell'd by that fantastic orchestra.

XII.

Onward swept the waltzers
To the wicked tunes they play'd,
And soon we were amongst them,
And my rattling partner sway'd
When'er the golden bubbles broke,
And trailing lights array'd
Elusively around its naked bones.

XIII.

A minute or an hour,—
Or maybe half a night,—
No matter, for at last
 I was over all my fright,
And the music rippled through me till
 I shivered with delight,
Fascinated like the fat green toads.

XIV.

And by-and-by I noticed
 How 'mid that grisly swarm
My clinging little partner
 'gan strangely to transform,—
I saw the bones as thro' a mist
 Of something pink and warm,
That quiver'd and grew firm from top to toe.

XV.

Bright copper-color'd hair
 Soon round her head did curl,
Her mouth grew sweet with tints
 Of coral and of pearl,
And she looked on me with eyes that seem'd
 Of lambent chrysoberyl,
While her body fair as alabaster shone.

XVI.

A witch she was so lovely,
To all else I was blind,
And the Devil and the Goblins
 And the Rout we left behind,
In our wild waltz whirling on
 The cool sweet wind
Of the lone lorn caverns underground.

XVII.

Like rose-leaves strewn
 Upon a crystal tide,
Like thistle-down blown
 By Zephyrs far and wide,
We swept in aimless ecstasy,
 Silent side by side,
Careening thro' those caverns underground.

XVIII.

A minute or an hour,—
 Or maybe half a night,—
No way have I to measure
 The madness of that flight,
For the loosen'd zone of witchery
 Made drunk with sheer delight,
Till we sank in happy stupor to the floor.

XIX.

Nearby there was a grotto
That open'd chapel-wise,
As from a rich cathedral
In sacrilegious guise ;
On the high Masonic altar were
Three crystal chalices,
And they held the sweetest poisons Hell can brew.

XX.

One was a liquor golden
That sparkled like the dew,
One was a wine that trembled,
And blood-red was its hue,
But the last Lethean elixir
Was dark as night, shot through
With glimmerings of green and violet.

XXI.

Then rose the witch and mutter'd,
" Quick, for the hour is late !
Quick ere the music ceases
And the locks of the dungeons grate
O'er the host of haunted skeletons
That here brief revel make !
Come free me by this altar's alchemy ! "

XXII.

“ Drink thou the golden liquor
That lights yon jewell’d rim,—
That sparkles fair as sunshine
On curls of seraphim !
Drink for the love I gave thee !
Or drink for a devil’s whim !
But pledge me to the time that yet shall be ! ”

XXIII.

“ But the gloomy elixir
Give me, that I may sleep
With the white wraiths that slumber
In the dim green deep !
Where the silence of the under-world
Shall wrap me round and keep
My soul untouched by any dreams of day ! ”

XXIV.

I drank the cup of sunshine,
She drank the cup of night,
But the red we spill’d between us
For sacrifice and plight
Of passion that must centre in
The sphereless Infinite
Ere her sweet life shall mix with mine again.

XXV.

A moment all her beauty
Was lighten'd as with fire,
Her fair voluptuous body
With its trailing, loose attire,
And her eyes to mine did glow as in
A sunset of desire,—
Then prone she fell upon the chapel floor.

XXVI.

And the white flesh wasted from her
As she was falling dead,
Her very bones had crumbled
Ere one farewell I said,—
From the sight of that dire sorcery
In wild dismay I fled,
Seeking madly for the low iron door.

XXVII.

Behind the Iceland column
I found it still ajar,—
Thro' galleries of darkness
I travell'd swift and far,
Until I reach'd the upper-world
And saw the morning star
Paling o'er a meadow by the sea.

THE MOONLIT WHEAT

I.

O LOVE of mine ! amid the moonlit wheat
Of harvest-fields how fair—how lily-sweet !
I saw thee stand and signal me alone
To that untrodden vale that was thine own
On that last night of all that we did meet,—
O love of mine amid the moonlit wheat !

II.

No thing within that region was astir ;
Entranc'd I saw it all as if it were
The scenery of a dream wrought to express
The longing of my heart, thy loveliness,
And that unseen romance whose theatre
Must be in regions where no thing's astir.

III.

Quaint and low, like some remote bassoon,
Across the marsh there came a muffled croon,
And all alone one melancholy frog,
Squat on the butt of a sunken cedar log,
Solemnly did serenade the Moon :—
In tone so low and quaint—like the quaint bassoon.

IV.

While in an elm-tree an oriole
Trill'd out a rural evensong that stole

In drowsy cadence from the upper air ;—
O Love of mine ! in Eden unaware
Some angel slept to let our spirits stroll,
While o'er us sang that golden oriole.

V.

And far above the starlit skies unroll'd
A spell of silence, and of things untold,
That seal'd our lips ; the warm ripe wheat, caress'd
By Zephyrs scented from the sultry West,
Went rippling like a sea of pallid gold,—
Under those starlit skies, so wide unroll'd.

VI.

But when I loos'd thy locks of yellow hair
To curl and shimmer in the cooling air,
Past coy denial, and virginal disguise,
I read the unutter'd secret in thine eyes
Of all thou wouldest surrender to me there,—
The while I loos'd thy locks of yellow hair.

VII.

And Time went by—and Time was naught to us :—
Only our wistful hearts grew tremulous
To hear the Zephyrs in sweet union sigh,
While slowly in the fulness of the sky
The lucent Moon herself sank amorous :—
And Time went by—and Time was naught to us.

VIII.

Alas ! how now the serpent years unfold
Sharp treacheries, and pangs unknown of old !
Yet once to have had thee mine—once to have felt
In thy caresses all my being melt
To passion's last felicity,—I hold
Worth every pang these serpent years unfold.

IX.

And oft I loose the gates of Memory
To seek amid the uncertain scenery,
O Love of mine ! some vision of thee, pale
Within the silence of a moonlit vale [see,—
Where none may follow, and where none may
Beyond the darkling gates of Memory.

X.

I am thy lover still, O Love of mine !
My heart shall never lose the fire of thine ;
And tho' I bide in loneliness and pain,
My soul shall hold her peace, and not complain,
Trusting somehow, somewhere, these arms shall
twine
Round thy sweet self again, O Love of mine !

THE JEWEL THAT CAME

I.

ONCE an artless maiden,
Fair and sweet,
Knelt too low, they say,
At an idol's feet,—
Just the usual idol
Made of the usual clay,
That went to dust entirely
In the usual way.

II.

Alas and alas for a maiden
Put to scorn !
All soil'd with the dust of her idol,
And left forlorn !
But in the dust she found
A jewel one day—
A jewel of wondrous beauty,
So they say.

III.

Then she sang : “ Now little I care
For the World so cruel ;—
O what were the World to me
Without my jewel !
For this—ah this is the heart
Of my idol of clay !
And I'll keep it and love it forever—
Whatever they say !

IN A NORTHERN LANE

IRENE, I saw thee
Once in the wane
Of twilight in June
In a Northern lane,
Whose borders were bower'd
In maples, and flower'd
With lilacs new-open'd by rain.

Instant an ardor
Too sweet to restrain,
Too wildly entrancing
For words to explain,
Was born of that meeting,
All silent, ungreeting,
But thrilling my every vein.

Forlorn then I falter'd,
I look'd on thee fain,
As one who might venture
Thy favor to gain
There and then—only
The charm of thy lonely
Beauty bid me refrain.

Sylph of the Summer,
In Summer's domain,
That mortal like me

May never attain,
As a star unabiding
I follow'd thee—gliding
By me in dainty disdain.

Now amorous Night
In passion and pain
Yields me thy vision
Again and again—
In dreams that enthrall me
I follow and call thee—
Irene, shall it all be in vain ?

NOCTURNE

I.

'TWAS in a garden of the rich
Where all were guests to roam
Down terraced lawns amid the gloam
Of a night in June.

II.

Gallants gay, with ladies dight
In silk attire, were there ;
But alien fine and debonaire
Stood one alone.

III.

And of that throng I knew not which
Could claim such cousin fair ;—
Akin she seem'd to the merest air
Of a night in June.

IV.

An orchid born of the young moonlight
That trails thro' tropic bowers ;
I found her 'mong those Northern flowers
So all alone,

V.

Till our hostess, with a smile,
Came and led me to
That orchid-maid—and then all through
That night in June

VI.

There came none other to my sight ;
The orb'd orange glow
Of lanterns lit a path to go
Off alone

VII.

Where bronzed Mexicans the while
On mandolins did play
Love-tunes of Spain that seem'd to say
That night in June :

VIII.

“ O Señorita of Delight !
Lo, the hour of bliss !
Lo, the years have bloomed for this—
This alone !

IX.

“ No carven Saint in marble niche
That pilgrims kneel before ;—
No dream of Eldorado's shore
On nights in June

X.

“ Can lure across the tossing seas
With promise more divine
Than can the beauty that is thine—
Thine alone.

XI.

“ Lo, this garden of the rich
Made wide for us, and free !
With all the crescent witchery
Of a night in June !

XII.

“ And lo, the overarching trees
That cover us from sight !
O Senorita of Delight !
Here—alone ! ”

FAREWELL

I.

I WILL not seek thee for mine own,
I would not mar thy fate ;
I will not breathe one vain regret
That we have met too late.

II.

I will not venture now to hope
Thy path may intertwine
By sweet, unseen and secret ways
In happier days with mine.

III.

But, Lady, I would have thee know
This once ere we do part
Since first I met thee thou hast been
An idol in my heart,

IV.

Before whose solitary shrine,
When Night o'ercometh me,
My soul yet keeps one crimson gleam
To dream and dream of thee.

V.

To dream what now thou may'st not hear,
What now I may not tell ;—
Ah, Lady mine, those dreams are past
With this—my last farewell !

THE ARBOR ARABESQUE

I.

’TWAS in an arbor arabesque
Where tangling vines did screen
From watchful eyes, I met thee first,
O wan and witching, passion-curst
Irene !

II.

Thy kinsmen kept thee from the World,
Cold as a cloister’d maid,
Destin’d for gold and high degree,
And deem’d their iron will by thee
Obey’d.

III.

A flower to bloom in stately halls,
Ancestral and alone,
They thought thee all too chill and pure
To break the seal of love’s allure
Unknown.

IV.

Ah, witching one ! I pledge thee still
For the ruddy wanton tide
That flush’d the virgin veins in thee
With young desire that would not be
Denied !

V.

That welcom'd me in the wandering days
When once, by starry chance,
I found thee in that Northern wold
Reading an Orient rime of old
Romance !

VI.

Oblivious to all else beside,
Thine eyes were dreaming o'er
A quaintly pictur'd open book
Of tales once told to Lalla Rookh
Before

VII.

Her minstrel lover left her side,
In humble guise grown dear,
To claim her where his palace tower'd
Within the vale of rose-embower'd
Kashmir.

VIII.

But what to me that day were all
The songs of minstrelsy ?—
Of maids who sigh'd and knights who dared
In ancient days ?—I only cared
To see

IX.

Thy silken hammock swinging low,
In crimson tangles wrought ;—
Thy body curving lithe and free
Within its yielding tracery ;—
Methought

X.

No houri-haunted bower upbuilt
By dreaming Saracene
E'er greater beauty did enshrine,
Or loveliness surpassing thine,
Irene !

XI.

Long 'neath the vine-clad arch I stay'd
Of that sweet solitude ;
Scarce breathing,—so I found thee fair,
I would not then retreat, nor dare
Intrude.

XII.

Where slept thy haughty kinsmen then,
The while I watch'd unseen,
The tang of those love-tale inspire
Thy willing body as with fire,
Irene ?

XIII.

No rumor of the World was there ;
 But round us seem'd to float
A low Æolian undertone
From gloom of royal gardens blown
 Remote.

XIV.

And when at last I ventur'd in,
 What words I found to say
I know not now—I only know
Thine eyes grew soft, thy voice sank low,
 That day.

XV.

Yet how for me thy love did swift
 As some wild rose unfold
Under the Sun of Summer-time,—
Ah, this may ~~may~~ not in idle rime
 Be told !

XVI.

But there were days—sweet stolen days—
 Ere dawn'd the wretched morn
That saw that arbor desolate,
And thee consign'd to gilded fate,—
 Forlorn.

XVII.

That banish'd me to roam, Irene,
Upon this barren shore ;
Thou hast thy gold and high degree—
I go my way and hear of thee
No more.

XVIII.

Yet still in memory thou are mine,—
Still one Midsummer night
For me is glimmering in the past
With the passion of its last
Delight.

XIX.

When the elfin zephyrs follow'd thee,
And their balmy breath did steep
All the dusk and sultry air
That waver'd softly round us there
With sleep.

XX.

For on that night—that only night—
When thou wast mine, Irene !
When thou did'st lavish all thy charms
On me, and tremble in my arms,
And lean

XXI.

Back in glad abandon to
My passionate embrace,
Love leapt to flame that all thy tears
Could not then quench,—nor after years
Efface.

XXII.

Out of the arbor arabesque,
In the deep Midsummer night,
I saw thee pass, and it seem'd the gleam
Of a falling star,—and it seem'd a dream
In flight.

XXIII.

O wan Irene, so far from me !
I know not where thou art ;
But I love thee, and I'll love thee till
Death's final hand shall touch and still
My heart !

XXIV.

Nay, through the night of the afterdeath,
And the ghastly vast ravine,
'Gainst all obstructions of the dead
I'll win some way to thee, dream-led,
Irene !

THE WANTON YACHT

I.

OVER the sea at sunset
I heard sweet music ring,
And I saw a white yacht sailing,
And I heard a fair crew sing :

Bravehearts ! Sweethearts !
We sail the Wanton Yacht ;
And anywhere and everywhere
That's far away and faint and fair
Is the goal of the Wanton Yacht ;
Yo ho !
For the goal of the Wanton Yacht !

II.

And long I stay'd to hear
Their songs that came to me
Out of the deepening twilight,
Over the purple sea :

Bravehearts ! Sweethearts !
We sail the Wanton Yacht,
Free as the wave and the careless breeze,
With only our hearts, Sweethearts, to please,
On the deck of the Wanton Yacht,
Yo ho !
For the deck of the Wanton Yacht !

III.

Till the blue of the Summer night
Grew dark like a sapphire stone,
And the Yacht was hid from my sight,
As I sang by the sea alone :

Bravehearts ! Sweethearts !
Sail on in the Wanton Yacht !
And would that I were with you this night !—
With youth and love and the loose delight
Of life on the Wanton Yacht—
Yo ho !
For life on the Wanton Yacht !

I D L E W I L D

I.

ONCE in the land of the Maple,
 In the midmost Autumn time,
The mellow, waning, yellow,
 Indian-summer time,
With the maid Estelle I stray'd
To gather leaves in a lonely glade
 Afar in the forest of Idlewild—
Forgotten Idlewild.

II.

And we linger'd there, for we sought
 The choicest of the leaves ;
'Twas hard to choose, and we could not
 Decide on the loveliest leaves ;
But all that dying Indian day,
While it waned and waned away,
 How they floated round us, glinting
In the amber light, and tinting
 All the aisles of Idlewild !
All the aisles and hidden places
Where the forest interlaces
 O'er the paths in Idlewild !
How they vanish'd, strangely hinting
Of the silent other spaces
 More remote in Idlewild !

Fell or vanish'd, ever hinting
Of the secret that effaces
All the joy of Idlewild !

III.

Till the Gates of the West were open'd—
O the Gates of the West are wide !
And the amber light sank down and flow'd
Away in a wine-red tide ;—
Away thro' the forest of Idlewild
In a wine-red, weird tide.

IV.

But the leaves drank deep till they drain'd
The wine-light out of the West ;—
The last of the wine, till it stain'd
Their hearts with the hues of the West,—
With the hectic hues of the West.

V.

Ah now in the land of the Maple,
In the midmost Autumn time,
The mellow, waning, yellow,
Indian-summer time,
Disconsolate I roam
Afar within the aisled,
Olden, silent, golden
Forest of Idlewild,—
Forest of lonely memories only,—
Silent and golden-aisled.

VI.

But I find therein no solace save
At a spot made holy with tears ;
At a spot where the ancient branches wave
O'er the palest dead that ever they gave
To that forest made holy with tears ;
And the hours pass there unheeded by
As I dream o'er the remnant leaves that lie
Strewn from the dim receding years
Deep on her grave.

VII.

O Estelle beloved !
Maid of my heart's one dream !
Thy vision thro' far Elysian
Vistas I see in my dream ;—
Vistas that loom thro' the ultimate West,
Wherein thy soul hath sank to rest,
Shrouded and shrin'd in a sabbath sublime,
Beyond the tremor and touch of Time.

EDGAR ALLAN POE

A star-eyed captive, in a lonely tower,
Look'd o'er a lake outspread in sullen gloom,
Illumin'd with infrequent lily bloom.

There wayward Zephyrs sounded hour by hour
Upon a harp whose pure Æolian power
Beguil'd him, as he paced his haunted room,
To songs ne'er heard before—voicing a doom
That from the very Heavens seemed to lour.

He sang the songs of Death till Death, his theme,
Engulf'd him in that Night of Mystery
Wherein so often he had peer'd to see
The trail of vanish'd Love—the Elysian gleam
Upleading to a starry destiny—
Twinkling from the very gates of Dream.

IN THE NIGHT IMPALPABLE

I.

I HEARD the tolling of a bell
Thro' a night impalpable,

And stunn'd and stricken downward into nether space I fell ;
To a sphere

Most curst and drear,

And for the damn'd ordained,

Where feeble in the rayless air they bide as souls enchain'd.

II.

Only unavailing

Vacant spectres round me paling,

Thro' the dismal gloom abysmal

Gape and grin upon me, railing

With a sound of silly laughter,

For they greet me all with laughter,

But oh ! they vanish wailing from the Echoes that come after—

From things that rise enormously

Out of Nothing—seizing me

In a slow unfolding Horror of Infinity ;

Yet within the awful coil

Something still survives to foil

The Horror ere it quite attains

To my soul—and then it wanes

Into Nothingness again—and still one hope remains ;

When the Horror shudders down one starry Hope remains

To pierce the evil darkness thro' and loosen all my chains.

III.

Athwart the gloom
In plain magnificence uploom
Titanic walls ;

And lo ! my doom is riven by a radiance from those walls ;—
By the ruby tinted hue
Of a radiance rolling through
A lone heart-shapen window carven high upon those walls.

IV.

Then down the far-enrythm'd deep
Sounds of passing sweetness sweep
That lull me into dreaming and the semblance of a sleep.

Etherial

I hear a call

In the tranced interval

Cleaving thro' Oblivion and lifting from its thrall ;
And I reach the lustrous edge
Of that lonely window-ledge

To peer among the marvels of the rising carnival.

V.

But ah ! despite

Satanic splendors opening in the heart of endless night—
Despite the masque and pageantry,
And music string'd in wizardry
Of ways and modes unknown—
Down the ruby-corridor'd,
Ebon-vault'd, ebon-floor'd,

Halls of Eblis unexplor'd,
I strive alone to see
The eidolon of one ador'd
Whose call uplifted me :
And those chasmal, lost, fantasmal
Halls of Eblis unexplor'd
Yield to me at length the sight
Of One apparell'd all in white,
Thro' the wide Pavilion gliding with the wine of red delight :—
One apparell'd as a woman—
Yearning to me as a woman—
With the love I dream'd of
Once—when human.

VI.

Then elate
I cling and wait
For the ransom necromantic yet to free me from this fate :
But alas ! the incense curling
From before her keeps unfurling
Dim narcotic veils between us till I swoon intoxicate :
From the luring and the lumen
Of her beauty, more than human,
Backward thro' the demon deep I swoon intoxicate—
Beyond recall I swoon and fall
Into the black Oblivion that now devoureth all.

O C T O B E R

WHEN I was a little fellow, long ago,
The season of all seasons seemed to me
The Summer's afterglow and fantasy—
The red October of Ontario :
To ramble unrestrain'd where maples grow
Thick-set with butternut and hickory,
And be the while companion'd airily
By elfin things a child alone may know !

And how with mugs of cider, sweet and mellow,
And block and hammer for the gather'd store
Of toothsome nuts, we'd lie around before
The fire at nights, and hear the old folks tell o'
Red Indians and bears, and the Yankee war—
Long ago, when I was a little fellow !

COQUITLAM

HOW oft I'd steal away, in hot July,
At early dawn, thro' dell and over hill,
To hear at last Coquitlam's purring rill!—
To whip the riffles with some gaudy fly,
And tempt the leaping trout, alert and shy!
Munching a bit of chocolate to still
My hunger, as the day grew long, until
The Sun was shining low upon the sky.

Then, proudly, with the fish that I had caught,
Go trudging home for many a weary mile,
Full certain of a mother's welcome smile,
And that she'd choose the best that I had got,
And bid me tell her all about it, while
'Twas cook'd up for my supper smoking hot.

THE VETERAN

ONE good old friend I had in boyhood's days,
Who far and wide about the World had been—
Had battles fought, and sieged cities seen,
And met adventure in a thousand ways,
That oft he told to me, in homely phrase,
Haphazard, like his careless heart, but clean :
It seem'd to ease the pains that rack'd him keen
To be the hero of my childish plays.

And when they put the old man in his grave,
I mind I stood beside—but did not see :
For thro' a blur of tears there came to me
A vision as of sunlight, and a brave
Awaken'd soul outsailing cheerily—
Uplift upon a wondrous azure wave.

THAT OTHER ONE.

I USED to go to Sunday-school
When I was a little boy ;
I said my catechism pat
About the wrath to come—and that
 And holy kinds of joy ;
For my pretty teacher told me sure
 If I didn't learn it well
God some day would stick me down
 In a red-hot hole in Hell.

II.

I used to think if God were dead
 How glad the World would be !
How all the solemn angels, up
Where gold counts less than a buttercup
 Beside the Jaspar Sea,
Would quit their endless psalm-singing
 And chuck their harps away !—
And never a lonesome cherub would cry
 Upon God's funeral day !

III.

I felt there was some Other One,
 Who'd watch and keep it right
For all the living things that are
From the grass and the flowers to the farthest star,—

Just Whom I knew not quite ;
But someone like my Grandmother,
 Too kind to give a rip
Whether I went to Sunday-school
 Or off on a fishing trip.

IV.

Who'd leave the Gates of Hell unlock'd
 So the devils could all crawl out ;
And the burning ghosts and the goblins too—
I oftener wonder'd what they'd do
 If they could look about
And see the trees and the Sun again,
 And feel the wind go by,—
I used to think those aching things
 Would be so glad they'd cry.!

V.

Some One who'd fix old Eden up
 For us as good as new ;
And never would be jealous of
Our silly souls if we should love
 A Golden Calf or two ;
And there wouldn't be any Forbidden Tree ;
 But if anything went wrong
We'd fight it out among ourselves
 Till we learned to get along.

VI.

“ When I was a child I thought as a child ” —
E’en so, good Father Paul !
But more and more it seems to me
That some of the things that children see
Are the truest, after all.
And e’en as a baby infidel
This pearl of faith I won,
And still I rest content therewith—
God is that Other One.

M O T H E R

I.

THERE'S a voice that I have heard
 Along the Way of Life,
A voice that soundeth only
 When my soul is worn with strife,
When I fall in utter weakness
 On the stony endless steep,
Someone comes and whispers to me
 “Sleep, child, sleep !”

II.

’Tis the Mother of us all
 That crooneth to me then,
Soothing me with visions
 And dreams beyond my ken,
With a song I do not understand,
 Whose words I cannot keep,
Only the burden of her song—
 “Sleep, child, sleep !”

III.

O Mother—holy Mother !
 O Mother of my soul !
Should day departing leave me
 Afar off from my goal,
Let me fall as a weakling back
 To thy bosom, dim and deep !
And o'er my failure whisper only
 “Sleep, child—sleep !”

HARD TIMES NO MORE

THE desert trail hath ended in
A garden way at last :
The burden of the iron years
Of wandering is past :
Dear Heart ! the very children cry,
Good-bye, Hard Times, good-bye !

Hard Times come again no more !
Hard Times come again no more !
O happy children of the King !
Hear them sing, sing, sing—
Hard Times come again no more !

How little in the Wilderness
The great relief is guess'd !
Where seek the weary multitude
Continually for rest !
And dream not how it draweth nigh—
Good-bye, Hard Times, good-bye !

Hard Times come again no more !
Hard Times come again no more !
O happy children of the King !
Hear them sing, sing, sing,
Hard Times come again no more !

The things that seem'd as shadows once
Alone are real here :
The glories of the Promised Land
Shine out before us, dear !
And we shall enter, you and I,—
Good-bye, Hard Times, good-bye !

Hard Times come again no more !
Hard Times come again no more !
O happy children of the King !
Hear them sing, sing, sing,
Hard Times come again no more !

THE DREAM OF THE DEEP

“We wake and find ourselves on a stair; there are stairs below us which we seem to have ascended; there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward and out of sight.”

—*Emerson.*

I.

LO, the Deep hath dream'd a dream
Of omen sibylline!
An endless flow of endless dust
Where unnumber'd gods are thrust,
Who writhe unseen.

II.

And blind and dumb they be therein
And find nor rest nor ease;
From stupor rous'd by quenchless lust
For that—they know not what—that dust
Can ne'er appease.

III.

And writhing so, they wreak the dust
To shapes of flor and faun,
That rise and fall and rise anew,
Crumbling, aye, as the gods reel through,
Until—anon—

IV.

A few see thro' the murky reek
What spirall'd pathway looms
In Titan reaches, coil on coil;—

Ah ! the wise gods know 'tis bitter with toil
And link'd with tombs !

V.

Yet the air grows clear as they climb, and keen
With perfume of numberless flowers ;
With passion of pleasure and poison of pain,
And tang of things tasted, again and again,
Thro' the endless hours.

VI.

But ever they feel one soundless urge
Ominous under all,
As wrought from the primal uncontent
Of some abysmal banishment
Beyond recall.

VII.

Nor purple bowers of idleness,
Nor all the feasts of Time,
Can free the gods of their grim unrest,
Nor lure them from the awful quest
Whereon they climb.

VIII.

The ages pass, and they find no end,
And vain it all doth seem ;
Yet still they toil for a topmost stair
Whereon to wake—somehow—somewhere—
Beyond the dream.

ILLUMINED

I.

I WOKE in the Land of Night,
With a dream of Day at my heart ;
Its golden outlines vanish'd,
But its charm would not depart ;
Like music still remaining,
But its meaning—no man can say
In the Land of Night where they know not
Of Day, nor the things of Day.

II.

I dwelt in the chiefest city
Of all the Land of Night ;
Where the fires burn ever brighter
That give the people light ;
Where the sky above is darken'd,
And never a Star is seen,
And they think it but children's fancy
That ever a Star hath been.

III.

But out from that city early
I fled by a doubtful way ;
And faltering oft and lonely
I sought my dream of Day ;
Till I came at last to a Mountain
That rose exceeding high,

And I thought I saw on its summit
A glint as of dawn from the sky.

IV.

'Twas midway on that Mountain
That I found an altar-stone,
Deep-cut with runes forgotten,
And symbols little known ;
And scarce could I read the meaning
Of the legends carven there,
But I lay me out on that altar,
Breathing an ancient prayer :

V.

" By the God of the timeless Sky,
O Saint of the Altar, say
What gift hast thou for me ?
For I have dream'd of Day :
But I seek nor gift nor power,
I pray for naught but light ;
And only for light to lead me
Out of the Land of Night ! "

VI.

Long I lay on that altar,
Up-gazing fearfully
Thro' the awful cold and darkness
That now encompass'd me ;
Till it seem'd as I were lying drown'd
Under a lifeless sea.

VII.

There shone as a pale blue Star,
Intangible—serene—
And I saw a spark from it fall
As it were a crystal keen ;
And it flash'd as it fell and pierc'd
My temples white and cold ;
Then round that altar-stone once more
The awful darkness roll'd.

VIII.

But there was a light on my brow,
And a calm that steel'd me through,
And I was strong with a strength
That never before I knew ;
With a strength for the trackless heights,
And scorn of the World below—
But I rose not up from that altar-stone,
I would not leave it so.

IX.

“ O Saint of the Altar, say
How may this light redeem ?
For tho' on my brow like a jewel
Its Star hath left a gleam,
O Saint, 'tis a light too cold and cruel
To be the light of my dream !”

X.

Anon 'twas a crimson Star
That over the Altar shone,
And there sank as a rose of flame
To my heart ere the Star was gone ;
And out from the flames thereof
A subtle fragrance then
Went stealing down the mountain-side
O'er the lowly ways of men.

XI.

The Star was gone, but it brought
To light in its crimson glow
The lovely things forgotten
I dream'd of long ago ;
And gladly then I had given
My life to all below ;
Yet I rose not up from that altar-stone,
I would not leave it so.

XII.

And at last was a golden Star ;
But I scarce know how nor where ;
For it melted all around me,
And the other Stars were there ;
And all in one blissful moment
The light of Day had come ;—
Then I reel'd away from that altar-stone,
Old, and blind, and dumb.

XIII.

I dwell again in the city,
I seek no more for light ;
But I go on a mission of silence
To those who would leave the Night ;
And for this—and this thing only,
Thro' the evil streets I stray ;
I who am free to the timeless Sky
Illumin'd forever with Day.

THE WAY OF BEAUTY

WHO brings a thought of self to Beauty's shrine,
Or jealous envy, by so much the less
Shall feel within his soul her deep impress—
Shall thrill at quaffing of her mystic wine.
For Beauty hath no care for thine or mine,
But wasteth wide in wanton loveliness ;
And only thus, in self-forgetfulness,
Shall any share with her the life divine.

O happy he whose heart doth full respond
To wandering Beauty's spell—wherever wrought !
He hath a pleasure finer than all thought
That instant as the touch of fairy wand
Makes rich the World for him, whate'er his lot,—
E'en tho' perchance a homeless vagabond.

THE BUTTERFLY

I.

Summertime, and a wasted shroud, and the sunlight glancing through ;
And the stir of a creeping thing withal ;
Thinking to crawl,—
It flew.

II.

As if a yellow pansy from its stem had loos'd and flown,
Up it flutter'd, scarce aware,
Thro' crystal air
Unknown.

III.

To find the narrow world that was now blossom'd endless wide :
And sailing on its saffron wings,
Soon wondrous things
It spied.

IV.

Around were honied feasts all set in the hearts of a thousand flowers ;
And merry mates to while away
In wanton play
The hours.

V.

With them it drifted, wing aslant, on veering winds at ease,
Or ventur'd cool luxurious flights
To the curving heights
Of trees.

VI.

Or lone amid the pink delicious petals of a rose
Anon 'twould linger somnolent
In the rapt content
Which knows

VII.

No end to leaves, no end to flowers, and the sweet grass under all :
Then revel again with its airy clan
Till night began
To fall.

VIII.

'Twould cling in careless slumber then to the nearest scented brake,
Or as the dusky hours wore on
Perchance anon
'Twould wake

IX.

With star-enamor'd kinsmen to explore a mystic noon,
Winging a far, entranced flight
In the lost light
Of the Moon.

X.

To settle at length awearied in some lily-chalice pale ;
Nor waken till full-breasted Morn
Rose breathing warm
And hale.

XI.

So passed for it the easy hours ; but Summer waned at last,
And its flower-body fell away
As a husk one day
Offcast.

XII.

Yet surely as before it knew a joyous wakening,
So on some new and far-away
Exultant day
In Spring

XIII.

Another form shall build itself from out the formless Deep ;
For outer life befitting well
The thing that fell
Asleep.

XIV.

For in the loom of things to be the meanest life hath place
To mark the way that it shall go,—
By patterns slow
To trace

XV.

Its long ascent thro' Dust and Death to God's infinity ;
And evermore the seed unseen
Of what hath been
Shall be.

IN ERRANTRY

BECAUSE I'm drunken with unknown nectars,
From ways made over-strait I turn ; in sooth
My heart is only half inclin'd to truth
Of learned scrolls and saintly calendars :
Bald Science misses, and Religion mars
What I have found, tho' blundering and uncouth,
For I was wronged with Wonder in my youth,
And dazed with visions of forbidden Stars.

I was a minstrel boy in errantry
Along the mossy ways of old Romance
In chase of Beauty whose elusive glance,
Thro' hapless ventures lured me brokenly :
But now from her I've had such sweet suffrance
That this dour World shall never sober me.

TO WALT WHITMAN

I.

HELLO there, Walt !
Out of sight on the old Highway
I hear your song :
I hear the words that you have said for me :
I, a sayer of words, sing out hello to you :
And you are not so very far ahead but you will hear my
words also.

II.

Words, Walt, words !
Your words, anybody's words, and the words of the rolling
Worlds !
But under all the one Word never utter'd.

III.

O Comrade mine !
Accepting all, eager for all, taking no denial !
Love shines in you, through you, from you,
Splendid as the Sun !

IV.

O eagle-eyed ! O Titan-heart !
I look with you to the heights of old philosophies :
Looking above and beyond them, shouting ahoy
To wonders weaving out of Wonder endless in the still
Eterne.

V.

But mostly, Walt,
I watch you saunter down with huge rejoicing tread
Tramping America :
Mixing with crowded Manahatta :
Swinging an axe in the Oregon forests :
Bellowing songs to the Sea.

VI.

For all your rant and brag about your States—who cares ?
But the coming of the lilacs,
And the call of mating birds,
And the smell of June, with its berries,
And the feel of the harvest air,
And supple-bodied youth, and clean red blood, and the ripe
white quiver of the grown girl's breast,
And all the easy common joys of Life to be had for the
asking,
The beautiful, bountiful flow of things in every land—
simple, copious, unrestrain'd forever,
The sky and the stars and the winds of God, and the lovely
faces behind the masque of Death,—
For chanting these my hat goes off to you,
Old stalwart out of days primeval,
Earth-born and generous !

VII.

Down South :
And the tide is coming in :
I watch you fishing from the edge of the old dock :
And a nigger sitting by you in the sunshine :

I listen to your lazy chat :
Careless there, happy, smoking a corn-cob pipe ;
Blowing blue incense into the round blue sky :
Calling it all divine.

VIII.

O but the Ocean play'd great tunes for you in octaves run
 too deep
For your tin-ear'd contemporaries to hear !

IX.

I tell you, Walt,
This World lies sick for want of men like you :
More glorious vagabonds and clean barbarians :
Monarchs of Life in the making :
Who find the tracks of God on all sides round,
And understanding not at all yet laugh content,
Confident as any babe that sees itself
Mirror'd in its mother's eyes.

X.

Here's to you, Walt !
To you and all good tramps of Adam following !
Free, fresh, savage !
Afoot on the open Road !
Taking the trail of the great Companions.

XI.

Comrades, ever comrades !
What other words to say !
Comrades, ever comrades,
On the old Highway !

THE SEER

IF I have seen the Gods—the primal Three
Who play a game that hath no goal in view—
Who make, destroy, and evermore renew
Within the bubble Space all things that be—
Why should I halt and labor soberly,
Or care to have men find my vision true ?
Enough, deart Heart, if I impart to you
The vast assurance that it gives to me !

Their muddy brains would make it all a lie,
Tho' with most golden words I told it o'er ;
So much I've seen that I must see yet more
While Time still gives occasion. Then to die,
Let loose, and on my single way explore
The unimagin'd orbits of the Sky !

NIRVANA

DOWN the ages comes a sound grown dark
With unremember'd meaning. Many heard
Fall from the lips of One illum'd a word
Whose doubtful gospel seem'd to quench all spark
Of separate love and joy, with promise stark,
If from their patient hearts still undeterr'd
They rooted all desire—the boon conferr'd
Should be to pass from Life without a mark.

Old devotees, dream on ! Old scholars nod
Over the meaning of the Indian sage !
But I, awakening in a later age,
Choose not the deserts where His saints have trod,
Nor cleave to ancient rites or holy page ;
Singing on my careless way to God.

THE CLUE

TO make the great escape—to issue hence—
 To live no more, nor dream among the Dead
 Nor be with endless change discomfited—
Think not you need all Time's experience
To ponder on some granite eminence.
 Enough in any life to find this thread,
 And loosely by its blended strands be led :
Unmeasur'd Love and sheer Indifference.

Beloved ! would you have me wait for you—
 Your fellow-pilgrim on the formless Way—
 And waiting seek some form of words to say—
Some novel phrase to make old precepts new
 And draw you swiftly nearer to me ? Nay,
Mere words have worth no more—you have the Clue !

CONTENT

BUT God stays—tho' all else fail and fall !
 He seems somtimes a Playfellow of mine
 Who winks at me and laughs—sometimes a fine
Red Flame to gloriously destroy : a Call
To bring green Worlds again : immemoral
 A Mood that wakes in me : an Anodyne
 To soothe me unto Death : a Sound divine :
A dim enamour'd Silence under all.

Amid the jar of things, and in wrong ways,
 I hurt myself continually, and yet
 Withal I stand, and with fix'd eyes forget
The bitter unfulfilment of my days,
 And feel my way to Him, content to let
All else between my fingers slip—God stays !

THE TOMB

AND he is dead at last ! O long ago—
So long ago it is since yesterday !
The World hath sunken round me, old and gray,
To sound of endless litanies of woe :—
Dear God, if I could know—could only know
 Beyond the creeds and feeble prayers they say
 That I might find him yet in some sure way—
How I would laugh against this Tomb below !

I've lost the meaning of the words he said
 To ease my heart before he pass'd from me :
 I walk the ruin'd Earth in agony,
And cry unto the Waste uncomforted :
 Across the blacken'd skies I start to see
 His name writ flamingly—but he is dead !

A tale no man hath told before—
A way no man hath known.

THE DAMOZEL OF DOOM

PART I.

I.

LIKE as a dream it came to me
In the lapse of a lonely year ;
In the shade of night I saw the shade
Of a shrouded maid appear ;
And drawing nigh it leaned o'er me,
And whisper'd in my ear :

II.

“ Cold—cold !
I come from the ghastly cold !
Where the dead are ever dying
Alone in the ghastly cold !”

III.

And then, as if an agony
Constrain'd that gruesome haze,
Its words come forth in hollow sighs,
The while its eyes did blaze
Pale lightnings to my own, now fix'd
In helpless dire amaze :

IV.

“ I am a starveling out of Hell,
A wraith of the restless dead,

And whence the damn'd lie damn'd the most
My riven ghost hath fled
For lust of the radiant life in thee,
And the fume of thy heart so red !”

V.

“ I lust for thy blood and the life of thy blood
But I love thy soul as well,
For the flame of it lit my own anew,
This thing is true I tell ;
And the beating of thy heart it was
That loos'd me out of Hell.”

VI.

“ For out of the sleep I cannot sleep
Thy soul was rous'd again ;
And thy body was wrought to the same fair mould
As when of old 'twas lain
Within the dust away from me—
The body that I had slain.”

VII.

“ O black the night that swallow'd me
When out of the World I fell !
Out of the World, and deep entomb'd,
I found me doom'd to dwell
Where time is still and Horror stares
On each—immovable.”

VIII.

“ Cold—cold !
Alone in the ghastly cold !
Where the dead are ever dying
Alone in the ghastly cold !”

IX.

“ Nay, listen ! I heard like far-off sounds
Sway down thro’ the lees of crime ;
And golden was their echoing,
They seem’d to ring a chime
Of words I said—of love I felt—
Long since—in the other time.”

X.

“ And echoing they took a shape,
And circled round and round
As airy, elemental elves,
Then joined themselves and wound
In wreathing ether over me,
And with a crystal sound

XI.

“ The circle touch’d complete and flash’d,
And vanish’d suddenly ;
And Time began again—I found
Myself unbound and free—
Free of the silent Horror there
That stared and stared at me.”

XII.

“ And I was in the outer night,
And I sought and found thee here ;
I saw thy body from afar
As a living star appear,
And fain to drink and slumber in
Its crimson atmosphere—”

XIII.

No other word came audible,
The shade 'gan withering,
As to my cold and shuddering side
It vainly tried to cling ;
Then drifted slow away from me,
A wasting, wistful thing.

XIV.

Until in the eerie light at last
I saw it fade and seem
To sink as it were thro' an ancient grave,
And sinking it gave a scream ;
And I awoke and tried to think
'Twas but a passing dream.

XV.

Cold—cold !
And are the dead so cold ?
And are they ever dying
Alone in the ghastly cold ?

PART II.

I.

That dream came not again to me,
Nor any dream at all ;
But well I knew, as the days went past,
There held me fast in thrall
A something of that shrouded thing
That wrapped me like a pall.

II.

An aura drear that sever'd me
From men and the ways of men ;
As some great evil I had done
My friends did shun me then ;
I felt accurst, and kept apart,
And sought them not again.

III.

But O how chill the World did grow !
And the Sun, as a thing unreal,
Did glare and glare thro' the vacant day,
And never a ray I'd feel
To warm my blood, the light fell thin
And gray as spectral steel.

IV.

A pale disease took hold on me,
And when the night would come
I had no rest, but sleepless lay

As stark as clay, and numb;
And could not stir till dawn would break
Nor gasp, for I was dumb.

V.

And yet were times all faintly tinged
With a glimmering ecstasy;
Moments that linger'd in their flight,
Trailing a light to me
Elusive and wan as the phosphor foam
That floats on the midnight sea.

VI.

And out of my stricken body then
My soul would seem to creep,
And over a sheer unfathom'd brink
Of silence sink asleep,
Beyond the shadow and sound of dreams,
And deeper than Earth is deep.

VII.

Yet ever from those slumber spells,
That seem'd like years, I'd start
Sudden awake, bewilder'd by
A presence nigh my heart,
As if a soul had stirr'd in me
That of me was no part.

VIII.

And so three seasons pass'd away,
And the early Summer came ;
And still that weird fantasy
Enshrouded me the same ;
But now it seem'd as luminous
With some alchemic flame.

IX.

At length in a garden wide and old
A garden all my own,
One afternoon I lay at ease
Under the trees alone,
While the fragrant day fell off in the West
Like a Titan rose o'erblown.

X.

And lying there I dream'd once more,
And it seemed that a scarlet bird
Flew out of my heart with a joyous cry,
To the topmost sky, and I heard
Her song come echoing down to me,
Yearning word on word :

XI.

“ Slow—slow !
O moments—O ages slow !
But love shall be my own again—
Be it moments or ages slow ! ”

P A R T I I I .

I.

I waken'd in the twilight with
 A fever at my brain ;
All my veins were running fire
 With blind desire and pain
Of something that three seasons long
 Within my heart had lain.

II.

So cruel that first I heeded not
 A faint, alluring tune,
Trilling round me everywhere
 In the jewell'd air of June,
As far and wide o'er the darkling sky
 The crystal stars were strown.

III.

Till over the rim of the World uprose
 The slow round Moon,
And a voice from the inner garden came
 That breath'd my name, and soon
Floated full out on the waving air
 To the rim of an old, old croon :

IV.

“ Low—low !
The Moon lies low !
O Love ! my Love—come love me
 While the Moon lies low ! ”

V.

To the inner garden fast I sped
Till I came to the inmost tree ;
O the peace of a thousand years I'd give
Again to live and see
The pallid maid of the white, white arms
Who there awaited me !

VI.

But I have not the words to tell
The marvel of that tryst ;
Yet 'twas no phantom I did woo—
A virgin true I kiss'd,
With lips full red, and eyes agloom
With peerless amethyst,

VII.

And body lined and shapen to
The last of love's delight ;
I heard her whisper : “ I am thine,
And thou art mine, to-night ! ”
And she loos'd the silver zone that bound
Her garments blue and white.

VIII.

“ Low—low !
The Moon lies low !
And my love is mine to love me
While the Moon lies low ! ”

PART IV.

I.

“ O my beautiful—my bright !
Sweetheart in the cool dim night !
Calling thro’ the starlit silence
Low my name !

II.

“ With that sound there comes to me
A feeling lit with memory
Of regions lost and times o’erlaid,
And love forgot.

III.

“ Take me, O dream-laden bride !
To the rapture of thy side,
In this bower of unrevealing
Velvet gloom.

IV.

“ Long, my beautiful, I’ve waited
For this charmed night—this fated
Hour that yields thee up to me
From years unknown.

V.

“ Now shall be unveil’d to me
All thy maiden symmetry,
Seen like naked moonlit marble,
Pure and pale.

VI.

“Till no more thou canst reveal me
Of thy beauty, and I feel thee
As a flower whose touch instilleth
Chill delight.

VII.

“My Sultana ! in thine eyes
Let me gaze, where passion lies
Slumbering still within their sultry
Purple deep !

VIII.

“Till within my arms at last
In love’s embrace I hold thee fast—
Till beneath my own I feel
Thy heaving heart !

IX.

“While I gather—while I crush—
All the fruits of love—the lush
Delirium that dwelleth ’tween
The lips of pain.

X.

“O long—O last supreme caress !
O ultimate deliciousness !
O slowly sinking, satiate,
Erotic swoon !

XI.

“Swoon, my beautiful—my bright !
Dream far down in the violet night !
Down—far down, where reigns the dim
Lethean sleep !

P A R T V.

I.

My heart is a dry and wither'd thing ;
And I that am young am old
With brooding in the silentness
On that caress and fold
Of white, white arms in the Summer night ;
But the end is still untold.

II.

Nor shall be—for the end is not !
My soul, 'tween hopes and fears,
For the pallid maid awaits and yearns,
Her memory burns and sears :
But I it was who let her pass
To the peace of a thousand years.

III.

Slow—slow !
O moments—O ages slow !
But love shall be my own again—
Be it moments or ages slow !

For there be wondrous valleys hid
Thro' Hell's infernal zone.

THE VALLEYS OF RELIEF

I.

OVER a bleak and barren plain
Where flowers never bloom—
Where never slant the gold sun-bars,
Nor any stars illume
The dim and sullen atmosphere
There brooding o'er its doom—

II.

Alone there went an aged man,
Who bent and cower'd low,
As if across that hopeless waste
In fearful haste to go,
But could not, for his palsied legs
That painful dragg'd, and slow.

III.

For age not come of mortal years
Had over him unroll'd ;
Like wither'd leaves on winter trees
Dull memories and cold
Still rustled dryly at his heart—
But old—old—old !

IV.

And, tremulous, full oft he turn'd
His haggard ashen face,
Expectant aye whence he had fled

To loom in dread menace
A stealthy Horror, that e'en now
Crept after him apace.

V.

And long he fared with labor'd steps,
And many moaning sighs,
Till sudden changed the scene for him—
He paused in grim surmise,
And gazed, with feeble hand uplift
Unto his bleared eyes.

VI.

For on that plain, whose barrenness
No future may redeem,
Now with emotion manifold
His eyes behold a stream
Of solemn waters rolling with
Unbroken ebon gleam.

VII.

Behind the haunted desert lay,
Before a mystery,—
What hazard there of better plight,
What dark respite may be,
Not knowing yet he ventures on,
Round glancing fearfully.

VIII.

Yet when he reach'd the reedy shore
To brave the river's brink,

Despair almost like peace he felt
The while he knelt to drink,
Thinking in those deep waters there
How easeful he might sink.

IX.

But as he bent to take the draught
He spied a nearing light ;
And down the river slowly drew
A lone canoe in sight,
Wan as a crescent newly born
Upon the verge of Night.

X.

At that his eyes were steadfast set
Upon its glimmering rim ;
Above the current visible
The dainty shell did swim,
Until it gleam'd upon the tide
All fair abreast of him.

XI.

Then forth the old man stretch'd his arms,
With mutter'd prayer and hoarse ;
As if that vessel frail could hear,
It 'gan to veer, perforce
Obedient to his one appeal,
And shoreward bent its course.

XII.

A moment more upon that shore
And he has parted thence ;
He feels the soothing waters roll,
Relieving soul and sense
From every grief by reason of
Its slumberous influence.

XIII.

With closed eyes he lieth there,
And one by one is shorn
Of every thought with sorrow fraught,
Till he hath naught to mourn ;
And far upon the bosom of
That river he is borne.

XIV.

His age doth gradual dissolve ;
He is no more uncouth ;
He feels within an elixir
As if it were in sooth
The blooming of some pale, delicious
Afterflower of youth.

XV.

And now he's 'ware of warbling sounds,
Faint echoing and blurr'd ;
And now of one more clear and strong ;
A wondrous song he heard ;
It seem'd the happy dreaming of
Some lone entranced bird.

XVI.

A slow and golden slumber song,
Whose languid numbers gloze,—
A witchery of syllables
In woven spells to close
Sad eyes to long forgetfulness,
And marble-like repose.

XVII.

At length the bird's sweet arias
In fluted notes subside ;
He thinks how near its covert he
Would peacefully abide ;
Then once again his eyes unclose
Upon the river's tide.

XVIII.

Around him fell a warm twilight,
The waters now were blue ;
Far-off appear'd on either hand
A terraced strand in view,
Upleading to such gardens as
No mortal ever knew.

XIX.

And while he gazed that wan canoe
Unerringly did steer,
As 'twere a thing of destiny,
And presently drew near
A gentle shore outjetting to
A mottled marble pier.

XX.

And mooring there he stept ashore,
Still joyously intent
On seeking for that singing-bird,
And garden-ward he went,
Strolling thro' the solitudes
In fearless wonderment.

XXI.

'Mid spaces smooth and wide between
Where grow gigantic trees,
Whose branches ever quiver in
The faint continual breeze,
And tangle up the placid sky
With shifting traceries.

XXII.

Yet many steps he had not gone
Ere strewn upon the ground,
Or gleaming from recesses dim,
Or near to him, he found
Abandon'd bodies beautiful
In charmed slumber bound.

XXIII.

Comely youths and maidens in
Secluded dells alone,
Or else in easy groups reclin'd,
With arms entwin'd—all prone
Like fallen statues carven out
Of pallid Parian stone.

XXIV.

And some were e'en more fair to see
 And shone translucent white ;
They seem'd as waning to a sheen
 Of pure serene starlight ;
And even as he gazed one slowly
 Faded from his sight.

XXV.

Awhile he marvell'd tranquilly,
 And then his eyes did stray
To where an ancient man appear'd,
 With flowing beard and gray,
Who musingly toward him bent
 His solitary way.

XXVI.

But as he came his footsteps scarce
 The silences bestirr'd ;
He seem'd so rapt with reverent awe,
 He neither saw or heard
For holy thoughts that compass'd him,—
 He pass'd without a word.

XXVII.

And gravely thro' the mighty glades
 Upon his way he kept,
That ancient lone somnambulist,
 Who nothing wist except
The reveries beguiling him
 Where all the others slept.

XXVIII.

Then had he mind to follow on
The Elder for a guide,
Ere yet the forestry between
Should weave a screen to hide
His all-unheeding Druid form
Which on ahead did glide.

XXIX.

And long thro' aisled vistas that
Bewildering intervene
He follow'd on till he espied
A vast hillside all green,
With sloping lawns and fountains deckt,
And high whereon is seen

XXX.

A wondrous gleaming palace built
Of alabaster stone,
With many a niche and window set
And minaret far flown
'Bove golden domes outswelling like
Fantastic fruit o'ergrown.

XXXI.

And in its centre wide beneath
An ever-open door
Gives promise of all pleasantness,
With rich recess and store
Of priceless treasures taken from
The palaces of yore.

XXXII.

Yet that so easy seeming hill
Soon fills him with amaze,
Now near, now far, the palace gleams,
Like one he seems who plays
With quick reverse of optic glass,
Until at length he strays

XXXIII.

Unto a fountain playing in
A single column cool,
Whose showering waters musical
With diamonds bejewel
The silver'd air returning to
Their slumber in the pool.

XXXIV.

And by that fountain's grassy marge
One peerless maid doth lie,
Uncompanion'd as a star,
Her beauties far outvie
All others in those gardens seen,—
He will not pass her by.

XXXV.

Her face, half-pillow'd on her arm,
Is to his own upturn'd
So tenderly, that it did seem
She in her dream discern'd
His coming, and tho' bound in sleep,
Still for that coming yearn'd.

XXXVI.

His last desire finds body here
The while he bends to kiss
Her lips that open like a flower—
What dulcet hour is this !
And half she wakens in his arms
While he doth swoon for bliss.

XXXVII.

There hath he fallen by her side,
All outer life is spent,
Unto that pale encircled sleep
He yields in deep content ;
Thro' ages long to pass away
In utter vanishment.

NOTES

“ F E Y ”

Fey: literally “On the way,” “Death-bound.” A Saxon word denoting a Celtic mood. One who not only realizes himself on the inevitable way, but through some unusual experience in some instant of Time, has wakened to an alien, inexplicable Existence that leaves him bewildered, foolishly indifferent, madly impersonal, to the concerns of Life. To the Highlander the full meaning of the term is not expressed in either of the following passages, but it lurks between them :

“The Scotch peasants have a word that might be applied to every existence. In their legends they give ‘Fey’ to the frame of mind of a man who, notwithstanding all his efforts, notwithstanding all help and advice, is forced by some irresistible impulse towards some inevitable catastrophe. It is thus that James I.—the James of Catherine Douglas—was ‘fey’ when he went, notwithstanding the terrible omens of earth, heaven and hell, to spend the Christmas holidays in the gloomy castle of Perth, where his assassin, the traitor Robert Graeme, lay in wait for him.”—*Maurice Maeterlinck.*

“A mermaid had once met a piper on Sandag beach, and there sang to him a long, bright midsummer’s night, so that in the morning he was found stricken crazy, and from thenceforward, till the day he died, said only one form of words; what they were in the original Gaelic I cannot tell, but they were thus translated: ‘Ah! the sweet singing out of the sea!’ ”—*Robert Louis Stevenson.*

“LONESOME BAR”

“Triple golden years.”—(Third stanza, fifth line.)—The Klondike gold-rush, the greatest in history, took place from 1897 to 1900, during which period the Canadian North yielded about one hundred million dollars in placer gold.

“On a lay.”—(Sixth stanza, first line.)—A phrase originating perhaps with the sealers of Behring Sea, with whom it meant an allowance, in lieu of wages, of a certain percentage of the value of seal-skins secured by the hunters. In mining parlance, to “work a claim on a lay” meant to have an agreed percentage of the clean-up or output.

“I mush’d along.”—(Ninth stanza, fifth line.)—Mush—mush on—corruption of French Canadian “marchons,”—the travelling word for men and dogs throughout the Canadian North and Alaska.

“Sourdough.”—(Twenty-first stanza, second line.)—Early prospectors in mining regions of the Far West carried with them a lump of sour-dough, in lieu of yeast, for making camp-bread, and were dubbed “sourdoughs.” In the Yukon, however, the term was generally applied to those who had spent an entire winter in that region during the first years of the gold-rush.

“Mac an Diaoul—Peishta-Mor.”—(Thirty-sixth stanza, third line.)—Gaelic, meaning “The offspring of Satan—the Great Beast.”

“THE DAMOZEL OF DOOM.”

“The peace of a thousand years.”

“The Abbot gave me much instruction in matters of religion. One day, in a discourse on fundamental virtue, which I found difficult, he touched at some length on the nature and conditions of Hell. And I remember, in describing those regions of Hell which underlie the Paradise of the West, he stated, incidentally, that souls are only loosed therefrom by exhaustion of the livid, lurid or dark emotions that keep them there—by that, and the re-awakening of desires. By some of these desires the souls are drawn outward to Earth again, while through others, more subtle and fine, they pass into the Paradise of the West as naturally as a butterfly rises from the chrysalis. But having attained this state, and feeling supreme relief from recent pain and horror, they are prone to remain inactive, become lethargic, and are soon overcome by the delicious atmosphere of the place. And thus they lie peacefully intoxicated for a thousand years. Then their lives end. But the root essence of them all, I was told, is drawn upon again by influences ever seeking occasion for incarnation. And so, in Limbo, awaiting the birth conditioned by their divers natures, they and all manner of planetary life remain in suspense, like to the clouds in the sky, which await opportunity for return to Earth in endless drops of rain.”—*The Teaching of Tao.*

